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Candido Portinari: Brazilian Artist as Cultural Ambassador: A Re-Examination of the Library of Congress Murals

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CANDIDO PORTINARI: BRAZILIAN ARTIST AS CULTURAL AMBASSADOR: A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS MURALS

by

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List of Illustrations

Introduction

Candido Torquato Portinari (1903-1962) is considered one of this century's most significant and prolific Brazilian artists. He produced over 4500 works of art, which are spread throughout the world, mostly in private collections. Indeed, to survey his life's work is to witness a substantial contribution not only to the development of modern Brazilian painting, but also to modern Brazilian culture.[1] Like the work of such contemporaries as the musician Heitor Villa-Lobos, the architect Oscar Niemeyer, and the writer Mário de Andrade, Portinari's paintings helped to define a modern Brazilian cultural movement by reflecting the issues and concerns of an era in which Brazil strived to emerge as an independent modern nation in the Western Hemisphere.

Within his own lifetime, Portinari's stature reached mythical proportions as he became increasingly identified

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[1] A view of modern Brazilian culture through the life of Portinari is available and increasingly more accessible due to the pioneering efforts of the Portinari Project, or "Projeto Portinari," located at the Pontifical Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro. Since 1979, Portinari's son, João Candido Portinari, and his team of researchers, historians and technical experts have located and documented approximately 4500 works by Portinari and about 25,000 documents that are relevant to this artist's influential generation. A catalogue raisonné of Portinari is forthcoming, and will be the first of its kind in Latin America. Following this thesis is a chronology of the artist, primarily extracted from a biographical chapter within a Projeto Portinari compilation entitled Portinari: vou pintar aquela gente com aquela roupa e com aquela cor (Brasil: Projeto Portinari: Marval, n. d.)

as the predominant representative of modernity within the plastic arts of Brazil. His importance has become an occasion for varying perceptions of his significance, both within and outside of Brazil, which have since contributed understandings and misunderstandings about the art and the artist, frequently ending up as inappropriate categories and interpretations. What has often preceded and interfered with many evaluations of the artist and his work is an immoderate concern with what Portinari *represented*, rather than with an analytical consideration of his art and its historical significance. Perhaps this is due to the tendency of critics and scholars to regard modern Latin American painters "as embodiments of the national consciousness."[2] As one of Brazil's cultural heroes, served as an artistic "embodiment" of Brazil in a number of different capacities. In order to better understand his context and the impact of his art, it is necessary to review briefly some of the major ways in which his work has been perceived throughout the time period in which he gained recognition in the United States, starting in the late 1930s and continuing into the early 1940s.

By the late 1930s, when Portinari was at the height of his popularity in the United States, he was both a politically significant and controversial figure in his

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[2] Edward Lucie-Smith, Latin American Art of the 20th Century (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993) 8.

native country. He was part of an influential group of intellectuals, who regarded him as the fulfillment of a cultural void in the plastic arts. For them, Portinari was the success story of a modernist movement that had begun in the 1920s, when artists had worked to create a new and authentic Brazilian iconography that would socially define, criticize and change the country's orientation.[3] Portinari's painted depictions of Brazilians that emphasized his country's diversity of races and occupations provided a socially critical, yet humanist perspective within the arts that many found to be socially and politically relevant.

Despite the fact that some held Portinari's work in the highest esteem, negative criticisms of the artist proliferated, particularly in 1940, because of a growing notion that he had become an "official painter" for the dictatorial regime of Getúlio Vargas. Charges that Portinari was merely following an ideological program of the Brazilian government prompted a polemic that was played out in the Brazilian press, resulting in a dichotomy that the cultural critics designated: *portinarismo* versus *antiportinarismo*. Portinari was accused of being an "official painter" because he had been awarded a number of commissions from the government, primarily through the

[3] In February of 1922, the revolutionary Week of Modern Art *(Semana de Arte Moderna)* was held, marking the centenary of the independence of Brazil and challenging what was Brazil's conservative art world.

Minister of Education, Gustavo Capanema, who was an extremely influential advocate for the arts during the 1930s.[4]

Another way in which Portinari's paintings of Brazilian life had become a source of further controversy within Brazil was related to his fame outside the country that began in the middle of the 1930s. There were those in Brazil's upper class and mostly white circles who found Portinari's modernist style to be crude and offensive; moreover, this elite resented the artist's characterization of Brazilians as mostly African and Indian in origin.

Outside Brazil, the role increasingly imposed on Portinari in the late 1930s has been succinctly termed by art historian Eva Cockcroft as a "cultural ambassador."[5] By the end of the decade, Portinari was recognized in the United States to be Brazil's pre-eminent painter. His paintings were included in major exhibitions of Latin American art of the time, and his work had been exposed in such venues as the 1939 World's Fair in New York and in

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[4] Annateresa Fabris, Portinari, Pintor Social (São Paulo: Perspectiva: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1990) 25-40. Fabris fully discusses the *pintor oficial* controversy in this book, taken from her 1977 thesis, effectively arguing that both esthetically and ideologically, Portinari and his paintings did not reflect the philosophy or regime of Vargas.

[5] Eva Cockcroft, "The United States and Socially Concerned Art," The Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920-1970 (New York: The Bronx Museum of the Arts and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989) 192. In reference to his 1940 MOMA show, "Portinari of Brazil," Cockcroft uses the phrase "cultural ambassador" to describe the artist.

Fortune magazine, whose June issue of 1939 featured reproductions of his paintings as illustrative examples of Brazilian life. The artist's status as the major representative of the arts in Brazil was further confirmed by the October 1940 inauguration of his solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York, entitled simply "Portinari of Brazil."

Given Portinari's popularity, it is not surprising that in November, 1940, Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish would officially extend an invitation to the artist to paint a series of murals that would "emphasize the objectives of the Hispanic Foundation and its deep interest in the question of American modern art."[6]

This mural project developed into a joint commission, equally funded by the governments of Brazil and the United States. Completed in December, 1941 and inaugurated in January, 1942, the Library of Congress' Hispanic Foundation murals are an example of a Pan-American collaboration during an intensely political era, when the issue of hemispheric solidarity was crucial.

The historical context for this thesis is the time period of Portinari's many successes in the United States, starting in the late 1930s and continuing into the 1940s.

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[6] Archibald MacLeish, letter to Candido Portinari, 4 November 1940, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro. Trans. by author: *"salientar [mais] os objetos de Fundacão Hispanica e o seu profundo interesse na questão de arte moderna americana."*

This study re-examines the Hispanic Foundation murals through a number of perspectives in an effort to establish their place in a more inclusive art historical framework than has previously been done. In addition to an examination of the murals' significance as Pan-American documents, the murals will also be analyzed stylistically and iconographically, as well as interpreted in relation to certain predominant political movements of the time.

Most of the published literature on Portinari's Library of Congress murals has been limited in scope. The majority of the material dates from the time in which the murals were created, such as the extensive contributions by art historian Robert C. Smith, who was primarily responsible for the Hispanic Foundation mural project.[7] Subsequent literature on Portinari, with few exceptions, has only partially discussed or mentioned the murals as part of the painter's distinguished career. However, some of these exceptions have contributed enlightening analyses that have paved the way for the further research and study of not only the Library of Congress murals, but also of Portinari's extensive ouevre. An example is art historian

[7] In addition to Smith's interpretation of the murals, there were other notable reviews and analyses. See Mário Pedrosa, "Portinari: de Brodosque aos Murais de Washington," Boletim da União Panamericana 43.3 (March 1942) 113-133; and Edwin Honig, "Portinari's New World Murals," The New Mexico Quarterly Review 8 (1943): 5-9. Furthermore, there were numerous Brazilian writers and historians of this time whose work has been important for the development of the study of Portinari, particularly Mário de Andrade, Antonio Bento, Antonio Callado, and Eugenio Luraghi.

Clarival do Prado Valladares' 1975 iconographical study of the Library of Congress murals that revealed Portinari's use of past imagery, as well as an interpretation of Brazilian iconographical elements to be found in the studies and finished murals.

Through her pioneering book, Portinari, Pintor Social, art historian Annateresa Fabris has made important contributions to the understanding of these paintings. In an effort to evaluate Portinari's work in a more historically comprehensive manner, she has initiated the process of de-mythicizing this artist. Although her consideration of the Hispanic Foundation murals is not extensive, Fabris' overall investigation of themes and patterns within Portinari's art and life has provided a sound framework in which to examine and more fully interpret his paintings. Fabris' research and organization of material on Portinari has contributed an invaluable resource for future research of the artist.[8]

In the first chapter of this thesis on the Library of Congress murals, the social-historical context of Pan-Americanism will be discussed in order to establish the unique background in which Portinari's series functioned as an inter-American "goodwill" cultural event. After establishing the more specific contexts for these paintings

[8] In addition, for this present study, art historians Aracy A. Amaral and Walter Zanini need to be acknowledged for their contributions to the history of Brazilian art.

of the Library of Congress and the Hispanic Foundation, the second chapter will then present previously unpublished material regarding the origin and evolution of the mural commission. The third chapter will then offer a re-examination of the New World paintings by considering the works as 1) stylistically transitional for Portinari's artistic development, 2) part of a greater Pan-American mural movement, and 3) not only Pan-American, but also related to the predominant political currents of Marxism, Communism, and anti-Fascism. This chapter will also include stylistic and iconographical analyses of the four murals.

The artistic contributions of Portinari, and of many other Brazilian and Latin American modern artists, have not been been adequately examined as part of the visual history of the twentieth century. Although by no means comprehensive, this study employs an holistic approach to re-examining Portinari's Library of Congress murals in an attempt to understand better not only these distinctive murals, but also the historical significance of this twentieth century artist.

Chapter I
The Setting of Pan-Americanism

Throughout his life, Portinari maintained a number of friendships with a variety of people from other countries and professional backgrounds. One such friendship was with Florence Horn, an American journalist for Fortune magazine who had met the artist and his family in her research travels to South America. In letters to the artist, Horn often expressed her views regarding current events, occasionally referring to the increasing attention paid by the United States towards the nations of South America. An example is her letter of June, 1940, in which she states:

> There is a great new interest in South America. We have come to see that we must tie up closely with you. So we are courting you very ardently...which we should have done long ago. Anyhow, there is bound to be added interest in your show because...at last...the public is beginning to interest itself in South American issues and things.[9]

Horn's observations and predictions of "added interest" reflected the atmosphere of Pan-Americanism that was prevalent in American culture at this time, when the necessity for hemispheric solidarity had become recognized

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9 Florence Horn, letter to Candido Portinari, 22 June 1940, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro. The upcoming exhibition that Horn mentioned was "Portinari of Brazil," held at the Museum of Modern Art in October of 1940, for which Horn contributed an essay to the exhibition catalogue.

and was increasingly articulated throughout various arenas of American culture.

In order to appreciate Portinari's importance as a cultural diplomat and to examine the Library of Congress murals as Pan-American documents, it is necessary first to establish the social and historical context of Pan-Americanism. "Pan-Americanism" does not necessarily refer to a specific time period, but generally pertains to the practice or desired condition of solidarity among the countries of North, Central and South America. In this thesis, the term "Pan-Americanism" historically applies to the greater objective, prevalent during the late 1930s and early 1940s, of hemispheric unity coupled with the continued independence of the United States and certain nations of Latin America. In many ways, Pan-Americanism, as a collective movement, represented an overall quest for an American, or "Pan-American" identity, separate from the politically extreme and volatile situations of Europe.

In an effort to emphasize the relevance of the commission for the Library of Congress murals to inter-American cultural relations, this chapter will set the scene of Pan-Americanism, including considerations of the United States' Good Neighbor Policy, the unique relationship between the United States and Brazil, and the special role Pan-Americanism played in the field of art.

The Good Neighbor Policy

Despite predominantly isolationist sentiments expressed by many Americans during the decades immediately following World War I, the rising political tensions within Europe in the 1930s signalled a transitional period for the United States. At this time its governmental approach to foreign policy would begin to change, becoming more internationalist in its economic and political interests. Economically, the countries of the Western Hemisphere increasingly looked to each other during this time for trade and investment opportunities as European economic influence in the Western Hemisphere had decreased since World War I.

Established in the middle of the 1930s, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy was an attempt to cultivate hemispheric solidarity by diplomatically managing Pan-American relations and by avoiding direct intervention in the internal political affairs of Latin American nations. In the later 1930s, as it was increasingly believed that Latin American sympathy for European fascism posed a real threat to national and hemispheric defense, the Good Neighbor Policy developed such forms of influence as financial aid to Latin American countries for development.[10]

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[10] For discussions of the Good Neighbor Policy as it pertained to the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Brazil, see

In 1936, at the Pan-American Conference in Buenos Aires, the United States government officially verified the necessity of joining together for the defense of the Americas. After re-affirming the United States policy of non-intervention, the Roosevelt administration added "approval of a second motion establishing defense of the Western Hemisphere as a collective responsibility."[11] This was a historically significant step for the United States. As historian Elizabeth Anne Cobbs has pointed out, "since the times of John Quincy Adams and the formulation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, the United States had insisted that, among other privileges, the defense of the Americas was its charge alone."[12]

With the establishment of the Good Neighbor Policy and the cultivation of Pan-Americanism, the United States had begun to secure a stronger base for the continuation of its political and economic hegemony of the Western Hemisphere. As the political tensions in Europe increased, the United States sought further ways in which to encourage hemispheric unity and counteract possible fascist influences in South America. Among the South American

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Frank D. McCann, Jr., The Brazilian-American Alliance: 1937-1945 (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973) and Elizabeth Anne Cobbs, The Rich Neighbor Policy: Rockefeller and Kaiser in Brazil (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

11 Cobbs, 35.

12 Cobbs, 35.

nations, Brazil would prove to be the most crucial in the United States' pursuit of allies.

The United States and Brazil: A Special Alliance

The United States and Brazil historically have had friendly diplomatic relations. Even in 1820, when Brazil was not yet an independent republic of the "New World," Thomas Jefferson is quoted as proclaiming: "I should rejoice to see the fleets of Brazil and the United States riding together as brethren of the same family and pursuing the same object."[13] This traditional friendship was more firmly established at the beginning of this century when, in 1905, the U. S. Embassy was the first foreign embassy established in Brazil as well as the only U. S. Embassy in South America. Furthermore, during World War I, Brazil was the single South American nation to declare war against the Central Powers and, in World War II, would be the only Latin American nation to send troops into combat in Europe.

However, this historical alliance was tested during the years immediately preceding the United States' entry into the second World War. Anxiety grew in Washington in the later 1930s because of the combination of German influence in Brazil and President Getúlio Vargas 1937

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[13] The United States of America, Library of Congress, The Hispanic Room in the Library of Congress (Washington, D. C.: Library of Congress, n. d.) 1.

declaration of an *Estado Novo*, the new dictatorial regime which, for the United States, initially resembled the fascist dictatorships of Europe. With the direction and guidance of Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Undersecretary Sumner Welles, the Roosevelt administration continued to re-affirm publically the respectful stance of the Good Neighbor Policy while actively pursuing a stronger, more substantial alliance with Brazil.

Not only had Brazil become of greater economic interest to the United States than ever before, but politically and stategically, the country's cooperation was necessary for hemispheric defense. In fact, the northeastern section, or "bulge" of Brazil had been included in the United States national defense perimeter as designated by the National War College in 1939.[14] Strategically, this northeastern part of Brazil, particularly the area surrounding the city of Natal, was important for American security and would serve throughout World War II as not only a port of defense, but a supply route to North Africa.

From 1937 until the United States' entry into the war, Vargas maintained a position of neutrality even though there were those in his administration strongly in favor either of the United States or Nazi Germany. Vargas

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[14] See Stanley E. Hilton, Hitler's Secret War in South America: 1939-1945 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981) 3.

seemingly "rode the fence" during this period as he continued to express solidarity with the United States through his influential ambassador to the United States, Oswaldo Aranha, and also maintained good foreign relations and trade with Germany. In addition, he appeased the pro-fascist military leaders within his government. In an effort to retain as much Brazilian independence as possible, Vargas allowed Washington and Berlin to become rivals for his attention.[15]

Although in the Fall of 1941, Vargas made a secret agreement with the United States government, permitting placement of its troops in the northeast section of Brazil and then eventually became an official Ally in November, 1942, the traditional alliance between the two largest nations in the Western Hemisphere had been tested. The period from 1937 until 1945 was a time in which the United States and Brazil were, in many ways, the most interdependent in their diplomatic history. The United States' attention to Brazil, which Florence Horn had termed "courting," was reflected through such inter-cultural events as the commission for Portinari's Library of Congress murals.

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[15] See Hilton, 12-27. Here the author describes Vargas as a "Machiavellian leader" who used the rivalry between Washington and Berlin to his advantage.

Pan-Americanism in the Field of Art

As the necessity for economic and political ties with Latin America was recognized, Pan-American sentiment was expressed throughout American culture. In the field of art, beginning in the late 1930s, there was a dramatic increase in exhibitions featuring Latin American art. The Museum of Modern Art director Alfred H. Barr, Jr. attributed this upsurge to "dropping those blinders in cultural understanding which have kept the eyes of all the American republics fixed on Europe with scarcely a side glance at each other during the past century and a half."[16]

Before Roosevelt's establishment in August, 1940, of the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA), which served throughout the war as a major resource for inter-American cultural exchange, the Department of State, as part of its Good Neighbor Policy, had begun to take an active interest in encouraging cultural relations between various nations in the Americas. Unlike the later OIAA, which would directly aid in funding inter-American cultural events, the Department of State's Division of Cultural Relations was a service agency that was intended to cooperate with private organizations.

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16 Alfred H. Barr, Jr. "Introduction," of Lincoln Kirstein The Latin American Collection of the Museum of Modern Art (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1943) 3. Also, for a good discussion of the large amount of exhibitions throughout this period that featured Latin American art, see Cockcroft, in The Latin American Spirit, 184-221.

On October 11 and 12, 1939, the Division of Cultural Relations held a "Conference on Inter-American Relations in the Field of Art." Attended by approximately 125 representatives from within the field of arts, this conference was primarily a forum for representatives of various art organizations from around the United States to express what they thought would be the most effective ways to cultivate artistic exchange between the United States and various Latin American countries. Possibilities and resources for inter-American participation in the field of art, including the various problems of traveling exhibitions, student and professor exchanges, and different mediums by which to facilitate these exchanges were some of the topics considered. In addition, specific ideas and events were brought up for discussion and evaluation, such as the Museum of Modern Art's plan for a Mexican art exhibition in 1940 and the American Federation of Art's three year program for exchange of at least eight exhibitions between North and South America.[17]

Among the many representatives of art related organizations that were present at the conference and who contributed their thoughts and ideas were C. J. Abbott of the Smithsonian Institution, John E. Abbott of the Museum of Modern Art, Réné d' Harnoncourt from the Office of

[17] Conference on Inter-American Relations in the Field of Art. Analysis and Digest of the Conference Proceedings. 11-12 Oct. 1939 (Washington, D. C. : Department of State) 1-5.

Indian Affairs, Holger Cahill of the Works Project Administration, W. R. Valentiner of the Detroit Museum of Fine Arts, Thomas C. Colt of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and Robert C. Smith, the Assistant Director of the Hispanic Foundation of the Library of Congress.

Also present at this conference were artists such as George Biddle, Stuart Davis, and Rockwell Kent, who represented such organizations as the American Artists Congress, Inc. and who expressed a need for artistic exchange among contemporary artists of North, Central and South America. Kent appealed to hemispheric solidarity among the artists of the Americas. In his statement he said:

> We want the artists of South America to come here and meet us and find from us the friendship that they expect and then let us all come together in this great congress of artists. We will establish an era of peace and good will in the western hemisphere at least.[18]

From the start of this meeting, a Continuation Committee was formed to take steps to actuate the ideas discussed in the conference and to meet again and reevaluate the situation of inter-American artistic

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[18] Conference on Inter-American Relations, 14. Rockwell Kent befriended Portinari on a 1937 goodwill trip to Brazil. Portinari painted Kent's portrait that year and the two remained friends for a long time, sharing artistic ideas and the current news from their respective countries in their correspondences. Furthermore, Kent wrote the introduction to Portinari, His Life and Art (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1940), the only book on this artist published in the United States.

exchange. In the Continuation Committee Proceedings of February 15 and 16, 1940, numerous resolutions were heard and approved, one of them pertaining to the Hispanic Foundation:

> Whereas the Hispanic Foundation of the Library of Congress had already played an important part in collecting and spreading knowledge of Latin American art and culture, forming a center for the encouragement of free relations between the nations of the Americas, be it resolved, that the Continuation Committee of the Conference on Inter-American Relations in the Field of Art approves of the Hispanic Foundation and recommends that its functions be expanded in every possible manner.[19]

Soon thereafter, in the summer of 1940, President Roosevelt established the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA) and appointed Nelson Rockefeller as the Coordinator. From 1940 through the end of the war, the staff and budget for OIAA funded numerous inter-cultural programs. The incredible influence that the OIAA exercised during this period is important to consider for the context of Pan-Americanism in the cultural arenas. Not only would the office and its Coordinator be instrumental in securing the commission for Portinari's Library of Congress murals, but they were active in organizing numerous cultural events in South America.

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[19] The Continuation Committee of the Conference on Inter-American Relations in the Field of Art. Minutes of Meeting, 15-16 Feb. 1940. (Washington, D. C.: Department of State) 14.

When it came to Pan-American propaganda, Rockefeller's OIAA was not limited to a few traveling art exhibitions between the United States and South America. This organization sent many American and Latin American artists and movie stars on good will tours. In addition to developing radio broadcasts and publications for Latin American audiences, Rockefeller persuaded Walt Disney to create new characters, such as the cartoon Brazilian parrot Zé Carioca as Donald Duck's friend.[20] A further example of the OIAA's dedication to intercultural influence was funding American sculptor Jo Davidson to travel to South America in 1941 to create bronze busts of all the presidents of the Latin American countries belonging to the Pan-American Union.[21]

Whether it was through a traveling exhibition of Mexican art or a Disney cartoon character, the United States government's encouragement of inter-American cultural exchange reflected a Pan-American search for hemispheric identity and unity. This search was articulated throughout many cultural arenas. The Library of Congress served as such an arena through the commission of Portinari's Hispanic Foundation murals as well as through the enthusiastic participation of the Brazilian government.

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[20] Cobbs, 38-42. Cobb fully discusses the functions of the OIAA. In her discussion of Disney, Cobb cites Monica Herz, "Zé Carioca: O Embaixador de Duas Caras" (Diss., CNPq, Rio de Janeiro, 1986).
[21] "Pan-American Heads." Art Digest July 1942: 18.

Chapter II

The Hispanic Foundation and the Evolution of the Commission for the Portinari Murals

On Columbus Day, October 12, 1939, the Library of Congress held a dedication ceremony for its newly constructed Hispanic Room of the Library's Main Building, known today as the Thomas Jefferson Building. For this occasion, Archibald MacLeish, the poet laureate who had recently been appointed Librarian of Congress, gave a dedicatory address in which he emphasized the importance of a strong unity among the Americas and the necessity for cultural understanding between the United States and the nations of Latin America. Remarking on the common bonds to be found throughout these nations, MacLeish expressed his hope for a unified American "brotherhood":

> There are those who teach that the only cultural study proper to a great people is its own culture. There are those also who say that the only real brotherhood is that blood brotherhood for which so many wars have been fought and by which so many deaths are still justified. The dedication of this room and of this collection of books is a demonstration of the fact that these opinions are not valid in the Americas: that in the Americas, peopled by so many sufferings, so many races, the highest brotherhood is still the brotherhood of the human spirit and the true study is the study of the best.[22]

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[22] The United States of America, Library of Congress, The Hispanic Room in the Library of Congress (Washington, D. C.: Library of Congress, n. d.) 7.

In his attempt to express what defined and differentiated the people of the Americas, MacLeish reflected the Pan-American spirit of the time. Moreover, the establishment and dedication of the Hispanic Room provided an opportunity for the Library of Congress to reaffirm the United States government's commitment to furthering cultural understanding and good will within the Western Hemisphere.

From 1939 through World War II, the Library of Congress, under the direction of the dynamic MacLeish, sought to expand beyond its initial function as the nation's library by becoming an internationally significant cultural institution for the United States. MacLeish's stature, high visibility and connections were crucial elements in the expansion of the intellectual and cultural activities of the Library.[23] During the period from 1940 to the beginning of 1942, MacLeish was directly involved in the development of Portinari's murals for the Library of Congress' Hispanic Foundation.

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[23] MacLeish was nominated to the position of Librarian of Congress by President Roosevelt in June of 1939. There was strong opposition to the appointment by the American Library Association which argued that the position should go to an administrator and not a poet. Further controversy arose in Senate hearings on the nomination surrounding MacLeish's supposed Communist leanings. MacLeish became an influential participant of Roosevelt's administration as he served the President as an occasional speechwriter and as the first director of the Office of Facts and Figures. For accounts regarding MacLeish's position as Librarian of Congress and his relationship with Roosevelt, see Scott Donaldson, Archibald MacLeish: An American Life (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992) 290-365.

The Hispanic Foundation

Although the resources for the study and research of Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American culture had been cultivated within the Library of Congress since its beginnings in the nineteenth century, the Library significantly expanded the collection during the twentieth century. Archer M. Huntington, the influential Hispanist and president of The Hispanic Society, established the Huntington Endowment Fund of $100,000 in 1927; it provides annually for purchasing publications related to Latin American culture. The following year, Huntington donated $50,000 for a consultantship in Spanish and Portuguese literature. The additional contributions in the late 1930's of $50,000 and one-fourth of the income from 5,000 shares of Newport News Shipbuilding and Repair Company stock provided for the construction and maintenance of an Hispanic Room.[24]

Commissioned in 1938, the Hispanic Room was the work of Philadelphia architect Paul Phillipe Cret, who had designed other buildings in Washington, D. C., including the Pan American Union, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and the Federal Reserve Building. Through architectural interpretations of sixteenth and seventeenth century Spanish and Portuguese prototypes, Cret's designs revealed

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[24] The United States of America, Library of Congress, The Hispanic Room in the Library of Congress, 2-5.

a classical *Siglo do Oro* style. Cret planned two vestibules to lead into a vaulted reading room, approximately 130 feet in length, and lined with lunettes. Adjacent to the reading room are alcoves with iron balconies placed above them that lead to an upper gallery. Along the lower walls of the reading room runs a dado of blue and white tiles from the Mexican town of Puebla.[25]

As part of an overall design of the room, Cret included a design for a potential mural depicting the Columbus Coat of Arms. Cret's desire to use a steel surface for the mural became known to the Allegheny Ludlum Steel Corp. of Pittsburgh, Pa. As a gesture of Inter-American friendship, executives of the company donated stainless steel for the mural. The company also commissioned Beull Mullen, a Chicago artist who specialized in working with steel, to paint the mural.[26]

Shortly after the dedication ceremony of the Hispanic Room, Robert C. Smith, Assistant Director of the Hispanic Foundation, proposed that the rooms be "decorated with frescoes by an outstanding Latin American painter or by a

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[25] The United States of America, Library of Congress, The Hispanic Room in the Library of Congress, 6-7. See also Herbert Small, The Library of Congress: Its Architecture and Decoration (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982) 29, 157-8, 194.

[26] The United States of America, Library of Congress, The Hispanic Room in the Library of Congress, 8. This mural was dedicated on May 27, 1940.

group of such artists."[27] An art historian who specialized in the art of Spain, Portugal and Latin America, Dr. Smith had a particular interest in Portuguese and contemporary Brazilian painting. Through the resources of the Library of Congress and the Hispanic Foundation, he was instrumental in obtaining and providing information on contemporary Latin American artists for a North American audience. Furthermore, Smith's special interest in Portuguese and Brazilian painting would prove influential for considering Candido Portinari as the artist for the Foundation's mural project.

The Origin and Evolution of a Commission

In his proposal, Smith presented five different plans that designated where the murals could be executed. His plans ranged from the more modest "lunette over the marble tablet in the Hispanic Room and the lunette on the north wall of the vestibule" to the more ambitious suggestion to cover "the entire vestibule and Hispanic Room (lunette over the marble tablet, entire vault and wall areas about the windows, balconies and alcove entrances)."[28] The two vestibules, also indicated as the entry hall and north anteroom, were eventually appointed as more desirable and

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[27] Robert C. Smith, Memorandum to Archibald MacLeish, 14 October 1939, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C.
[28] Smith, Memorandum, 14 October 1939.

appropriate locations for murals. Although Smith's original suggestions for potential placement of the murals were haphazard, the sections in his proposal regarding possible themes and potential Latin American artists were thorough and revealing of the Foundation's priorities and concerns.

As part of Smith's suggested general theme of "Colonial Culture in Latin America," which he considered as a single mural or several murals "as additional funds become available," he included such subthemes as "The Education of the Indians," "The Establishment of the First Press," "Foundation of the First Universities," and "Development of the First Library."[29] Although topics that Smith originally proposed could be considered probable events in the history of colonial civilization, they were generally related to themes of education and research. As such, these subtopics referred indirectly to the surroundings of the Library of Congress, revealing not only a desire to create appropriate decorations for a reading room, but perhaps an intent to mirror, through the murals' depictions, the establishment of the Library of Congress as the primary cultural center for Latin American studies in the New World.

In his search for a Latin American artist to paint a theme of colonial culture, Smith weighed different artists'

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[29] Smith, Memorandum, 14 October 1939.

stylistic backgrounds and past subject matter. He proposed five painters that he deemed appropriate. Importantly, all had experience as muralists; and, of the five, three were Mexican: José Clemente Orozco, Carlos Orozco Romero and Jean Charlot; one was Ecuadorean: Camilo Egas; and one was Brazilian: Candido Portinari. Additionally, all five artists were well established in the United States or had already worked in this country.

An examination of Smith's roster of names and the accompanying descriptions of the proposed artists reveals that certain aesthetic qualities and stylistic aspects were important criteria. Smith was primarily looking for an artist who could execute a large scale mural series, particularly someone with a solid background in composition and monumentality of form. In his list, Smith noted each artist's respective style and specific abilities. Egas had the "power to organize and vitalize in rhythmic arrangement large quantities of figures" while Orozco's frescoes were "more successful from an esthetic standpoint than those of Rivera" and Romero is described as a "young Mexican muralist whose frescoes share the monumental quality of Rivera."[30] Smith emphasized that the Hispanic Room needed the "rich color schemes" of Orozco and in his paragraph on Charlot, Smith considered the architectural vaulting a

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30 Smith, Memorandum, 14 October 1939.

particularly important factor since this artist had worked for the Carnegie Archeological Expedition at Chichen-Itza in 1926-29 and consequently developed a style that would "correspond well to the solid forms of the vaulting of the Hispanic Room."[31]

In addition to his concerns about style, Smith also regarded the artists' past subject matter, particularly in relation to representations of the people of Latin America. In his summary of Charlot, Smith highlighted the "tremendous amount of Indian material" that the painter had attained on his expedition to Chichen-Itza. Smith's mention of this information is significant because the issue of ethnic representation, particularly of indigenous American cultures, was to be a defining feature of the murals. The murals were to employ the overarching theme of colonial culture to emphasize differences between the Americas and Europe, particularly, the diversity of races and cultures.

In his paragraph on Portinari, Smith clarified the importance of ethnic representation. In addition to noting the painter's "severe and solid" quality, Smith commented on the potential for presenting a "universal Latin-American theme" based on Portinari's "interpretation of the Brazilian Negro in conjunction with the Indian of the Mexicans."[32]

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31 Smith, Memorandum, 14 October 1939.
32 Smith, Memorandum, 14 October 1939.

It was eventually decided that the potential for a "universal Latin American theme" existed in the works of Candido Portinari. Although the proposal for the Hispanic Foundation murals originated in the fall of 1939, it was not until November, 1940 that MacLeish approached Portinari about the project.[33]

Robert C. Smith's particular interest in Brazilian art was a decisive factor in Portinari's being chosen for the murals. Even before his October 1939 proposal for the mural project, Smith had been in correspondence with the Brazilian government's Ministry of Education in Rio de Janeiro requesting information about Brazilian artists, specifically Portinari and Oswaldo Teixeira.[34] Also, prior to the October 1939 proposal, Smith wrote the article, "Brazilian Painting in New York" in which he discussed Portinari in relation to other contemporary Brazilian artists. In addition to his essay, which was published in the September 1939 edition of the Bulletin of the Pan-

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[33] As for the other artists who were listed in Smith's 1939 proposal, there is no evidence in the Library of Congress Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, or at the Projeto Portinari Archives to indicate that they were ever contacted or they were considered for this mural project.

[34] Annateresa Fabris, Portinari, Pintor Social (São Paulo: Perspectiva: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1990) 27. Fabris states that Smith requested information from the Ministry of Education and the Minister's secretary, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, added a few additional names of artists and information, but left out some very important names, such as Tarsila do Amaral, Lasar Segall and Emiliano Di Calvacanti. This was an early source of controversy for the group of artists and intellectuals who would argue that Portinari was an "official painter" who received preferential treatment.

American Union, Smith also wrote a piece for the catalogue of Portinari's 1940 solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Further indication of Smith's influence can be found in a letter written some forty years later to the artist's son, João Candido Portinari, by Lewis Hanke, who had been Director of the Hispanic Foundation during the period in question. Hanke recalled Smith as the "Library of Congress officer most responsible" for both the mural project and for proposing Portinari to MacLeish as the artist for the job.[35] Another factor in choosing Portinari may be that, beginning in 1939 and throughout 1940, his exposure and popularity in the United States had increased dramatically.[36]

In November of 1940, Portinari responded positively to MacLeish's invitation. In his proposal, MacLeish had explained that since the Library of Congress was a "government building whose decoration is closely connected

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[35] Lewis Hanke, letter to João Candido Portinari, 17 September 1979, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro. This letter was written in response to Portinari's son's request for information for the archives on his father, which evolved into the Projeto Portinari.

[36] Although Portinari had been introduced to the United States' art world in 1935, when he won second honorable mention at the Carnegie International Exhibition, it was not until 1939 and 1940 that his frequent exhibitions in the United States made him known here as Brazil's pre-eminent painter. Exhibitions during 1940 in the U. S. that featured Portinari's works were: An Exhibition of Modern Paintings, Drawings and Primitive African Sculpture from the Collection of Helena Rubinstein (March, Washington, D. C.); Solo exhibition at the Pan-American Union (Spring, Washington, D. C.); Latin American Exhibition of Fine Arts at the Riverside Museum (July, New York and itinerant); Individual Exposition of Portinari's work at the Detroit Institute of Art (August, Detroit); Portinari of Brazil at MOMA (October, New York).

with the supervision of certain official agencies like the Architect of the Capitol and the Fine Arts Commission of Washington," the project would take considerable time. He recommended that Portinari, who was in the United States at the time, return to Brazil and study the subject that "is therefore delicate and requires that you submit some preparatory drawings which could be shown to those whose functions entitle them to be approached in this matter" and that only "with these drawings can we consider the future prosecution of the subject."[37]

In May of 1941 Dr. Smith assured Portinari that the Library's interest in the murals had not diminished and that they were not considering any other artist. Smith also reiterated the Library's need to have sketches ahead of time.[38] Two months later, however, confusion arose regarding two letters Dr. Smith had recently received from the artist. In a memorandum of July 21, 1941, Hanke relayed to MacLeish that Portinari had written letters informing Smith that both President Getúlio Vargas and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Oswaldo Aranha, had provided funds for Portinari to travel to the United States to "carry on his labors in the Library." Hanke expressed to MacLeish the Hispanic Foundation's uncertainty as to whether Portinari

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[37] Archibald MacLeish, letter to Candido Portinari, 14 November 1940, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro.

[38] Robert C. Smith, letter to Candido Portinari, 13 May 1941, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro.

was traveling to the United States "under full government sail to start painting on the walls" or if the Brazilian government was providing "an opportunity for him to come to this country to work out his sketches for submission." Hanke emphasized that once the "Portinari problem" arrived in the United States, MacLeish should immediately tell the artist that the Library did "not now have the money to pay for this mural work" and that no authorization could be given by the Librarian until sketches were submitted and approved.[39]

After Portinari arrived, he met with MacLeish, Hanke and Smith, who further explained the Library's situation. Also, the three general topics of Exploration, Ecclesiastical Establishment and Economic Conquest were agreed to be appropriate for the murals, as was the artist's estimation that he would need approximately six months to complete them. The painter had received four thousand dollars from the Brazilian government intended to cover his family's travel and living expenses while he prepared the sketches. According to Hanke, Portinari stated that if the Library demonstrated an official interest to President Vargas more money could be obtained from the Brazilian government in order to complete the murals.[40]

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[39] Lewis Hanke, Memorandum to Archibald MacLeish, 21 July 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C..

[40] Lewis Hanke, letter to Henry Allen Moe, 19 August 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C. In this letter, Hanke explains the situation to Moe and expresses an interest in

However, it was made clear throughout the correspondences regarding Portinari and the intended murals that further funding by the Brazilian government was not an acceptable option. The Brazilian government may have initiated the realization of the mural project, but the Library needed to find a way in which to complete it.

In the Library's immediate need to procure funds for the murals, MacLeish suggested that Hanke contact Henry Allen Moe of the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation to ascertain if they had available funds for the project. In a letter to Moe, Hanke stated a preference for obtaining money from a non-governmental source. However, Moe responded to Hanke's request on August 22, 1941, not as a representative of the Guggenheim Foundation, but as the chairman of the Committee for Inter-American Artistic and Intellectual Relations. The committee, based in New York, received funds for projects through Nelson Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs.[41]

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securing money from the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for the murals' completion.

41 Henry Allen Moe, letter to Lewis Hanke, 22 August 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C. See also Henry Allen Moe, letter to Archibald MacLeish, 9 October 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C. In the August letter, Moe explains to Hanke that he must contact the other committee members before making a decision. The committee members were Moe, of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, Frederick P. Keppel of the Carnegie Corporation and David H. Stevens of the Rockefeller Foundation. The October letter indicates the source of the committee's funding, namely the Department of State's Office of Inter-American Affairs.

During the next month, as the Library waited for an official notification from the Committee for Inter-American Artistic and Intellectual Relations regarding the financial situation, MacLeish served as a diplomatic speaker for the Library. He reassured Portinari by outlining an arrangement for him to begin his work. MacLeish explained that after the sketches had been approved, Portinari would be paid for the mural work on a fellowship basis with an honorarium that would amount to $2500. He added that, although the Library did not yet have the moneys for the murals, it was "energetically seeking such funds."[42] In a letter of August 25, Portinari informed MacLeish that he was sending a copy of MacLeish's letter outlining the conditions "under which an agreement may be reached on the proposed murals" to the Brazilian government and stated that he would begin the preliminary sketches before the end of the month.[43]

Unfortunately, the following month was no less complicated. By the middle of September, there was still no word from the Committee for Inter-American Artistic and Intellectual Relations, and Smith sent a memorandum to MacLeish relaying Portinari's conditions for the completion of the murals. First, the artist would paint four smaller panels on canvas which could be affixed to the center of

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[42] Archibald MacLeish, letter to Candido Portinari, 22 August 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C.
[43] Candido Portinari, letter to Archibald MacLeish, 25 August 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C.

the principal four walls with small wooden frames. Then, after the drawings had been approved in Washington, work would actually be undertaken in New York, since Portinari could find no suitable studio in Washington and materials were hard to find there as well.[44]

During the following week, MacLeish acted directly with the artist to quickly resolve these difficulties. In order for the murals to be executed in a more ideal environment, MacLeish had, by September 23rd, secured a studio in the Library of Congress that was satisfactory to the artist. Also by this date, MacLeish had received approval of the drawings from the Architect of the Capitol, David Lynn, and had written a letter to President Vargas, presenting the situation in an official, diplomatic manner, describing Portinari as serving on a mission of the utmost cultural importance. In addition to explaining to Vargas that Portinari had agreed to accept a modest payment, MacLeish praised Vargas for his generosity in providing funds for sending Portinari to Washington, D.C.[45] MacLeish's words were those of an experienced diplomat when he expressed to Vargas his certainty that the Hispanic

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[44] Robert C. Smith, Memorandum to Archibald MacLeish, 15 September 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C.

[45] Archibald MacLeish, letter to Getúlio Vargas, 17 September 1941, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro. This letter was later published in Brazil as part of an article. "A Obra de Candido Portinari: Como o diretor da Biblioteca do Congresso de Washington se refere ao grande artista Brasileiro, em carta ao Presidente Getúlio Vargas," Meio-Dia, 4 November 1941: Rio de Janeiro.

Foundation murals would have beneficial and more far-reaching consequences than the painting itself. He predicted that a closer cultural contact would be made between the "two great republics, the United States of Brazil and the United States of North America."[46]

By September 25, 1941, MacLeish heard from Moe that $4000 was allotted for the execution of the frescoes. However, the manner in which the money would be handled became an important aspect of the arrangements. Moe was meticulous in his requests to Smith for official documents of approval and letters from all those who participated in the project. Furthermore, he had expressed to Smith earlier that he felt there was "danger in Portinari's being offered more money by the Brazilian government," particularly since Moe believed that the painter's character had shown a "mercenary streak."[47] Since the committee providing the needed donation for the completion of the murals was itself funded through the Department of State's Office of Inter-American Affairs, the mural project evolved into a political situation. From Moe's perspective, if his committee was responsible for the completion of the murals

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[46] Archibald MacLeish, letter to Getúlio Vargas, 17 September 1941, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro. Trans. by author: *"duas grandes republicas, os Estados Unidos do Brasil e os Estados Unidos da America do Norte."*

[47] Robert C. Smith, Memorandum to Archibald MacLeish, 24 September 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C. In the memorandum, Smith relays details of his conversation with Moe to MacLeish.

under the auspices of the United States government, it was to be carried out as an inter-American cultural exchange and not as a special project funded by the Brazilian government.

Portinari's Murals as an Inter-American Goodwill Event

Because Moe and the Library of Congress officers were able to secure a contract ensuring Portinari's acceptance of the money, the murals increasingly became "Goodwill" murals between two American nations. On October 10th, Smith sent a memorandum to MacLeish that outlined further requests made by Moe regarding the $4000 provided by the committee. Out of this amount, the Library of Congress had originally planned to pay Portinari his honorarium of $2500 and use the remainder to cover the costs of materials and return the remainder to the committee. However, Moe instructed that the entire $4000 was to go entirely to Portinari, thus "matching the money that the Brazilians have put up."[48] A few days later, on October 13, 1941, MacLeish received a letter from Moe accompanying the check, in which he expressed:

> We are pleased to participate in making possible the execution of the murals in the Hispanic Foundation by Brazil's distinguished artist and it seems to us appropriate that, since the government of Brazil has provided approximately $4000, that we provide a like

[48] Robert C. Smith, Memorandum to Archibald MacLeish, 10 October 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol.

> amount at out disposal through the coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.[49]

After the financial arrangements were made and the money was officially presented to Portinari by MacLeish, the artist expressed his appreciation to the Librarian for this great artistic opportunity. He also informed Smith that Brazilians had shown a great deal of interest in the murals.

From the start, the publicity in Brazil regarding the murals was extensive. Numerous articles appeared in Brazilian newspapers about Portinari's departure to the United States as well as his time in Washington, D.C. Upon his return to Brazil in January, 1942, newspapers published various articles and interviews with the artist regarding his experiences in the United States.[50] In the United

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[49] Henry Allen Moe, letter to Archibald MacLeish, 9 October 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D.C. It is interesting that Moe mentions the "Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs," instead of the "Office of Inter-American Affairs." The "Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs" was Nelson Rockefeller's title. Since Rockefeller's interest in Latin American art and art patronage was extensive before he took on this post, one might wonder if Rockefeller took a personal interest in this project and if he was instrumental in its arrangements, particularly since he was later involved with the murals' inauguration ceremony and also was a friend of Portinari and his family.

[50] A number of articles featured photographs of either the murals or of the artist with President Vargas. Some examples of articles are: Francisco de Assis Barbosa, "Portinari, Pintor das Américas," Diretrizes 29 January 1942.; "A arte de Candido Portinari nos murais da Biblioteca do Congresso de Washington,"Diário da Noite 20 January 1942.; "Contribuição altamente original para as artes americanas," O Jornal 29 January 1942.; "Da fazendinha de Brodowski à Biblioteca do Congresso de Washington," Correio da Noite 2 February 1942.; and "Portinari fala dos Estados Unidos," Diário da Noite 23 January 1942.

States, however, the publicity was limited until after the murals were formally inaugurated.

It is clear that Brazil was sending Portinari as its "good will" ambassador and as the best the country had to offer. Oswaldo Aranha, Brazil's Minister of Foreign Affairs, sent a letter officially introducing Portinari to Carlos Martin Pereira e Souza, the Brazilian ambassador in Washington, D.C., as serving on a special artistic mission to the United States.[51] The Brazilian government's public enthusiasm for helping to finance Portinari's "artistic mission" can be construed as a strong statement of Pan-American solidarity. This administration, which had maintained a friendly and neutral stance toward Germany, was at this time closer to a stronger and more substantial alliance with the United States. This cultural event provided an opportunity for Brazil to realign itself publically and more firmly with the United States.

In Library of Congress documents dated after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, which incited the United States' entry into the war, there is a noticeable change in the correspondence pertaining to the planned inauguration ceremony for the Hispanic Foundation

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All Brazilian articles directly regarding Portinari were located in the collection of the Projeto Portinari Archives in Rio.

[51] Oswaldo Aranha, letter to Carlos Martin Pereira e Souza, 6 August 1941, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro. Trans. by author: *"...Senhor Candido Portinari, que nomeado pelo Senhor Presidente da Republica, vai os Estados Unidos da America em missão artistica especial,..."*

murals, especially in terms of the higher degree of formality. Such a change called for a clearer expression of alliance and solidarity with Brazil. The issue of hemispheric solidarity was more crucial than ever, as the United States had officially entered the war against fascism, and Brazil had not yet completely abandoned its position of neutrality to join the Allies.

In a memorandum on November 28, 1941, Hanke outlined a substantial inauguration for the murals that included a small luncheon and a public opening of the murals, for which approximately a few thousand invitations would be sent to "Washington society, diplomatic corps, art critics, newpapers and other interested persons."[52] In addition, Hanke suggested incorporating some music, light beverages and brief remarks by the Brazilian Ambassador, the Librarian, and Portinari. In a later memorandum dated December 11, 1941, Hanke expressed a desire for a more formal unveiling "than originally was contemplated."[53] He suggested that perhaps the Brazilian ambassador and "some distinguished person connected to our government" be asked to give brief talks, such as the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, Nelson Rockefeller; First Lady, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt; and Secretary of State, Cordell Hull.

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[52] Lewis Hanke, Memorandum to Luther Evans, 28 November 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C.
[53] Lewis Hanke, Memorandum to Luther Evans, 11 December 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C.

Moreover, Hanke submitted that "due provision be made for adequate press coverage and that we explore the possibility of having the whole program broadcast via short-wave directly to Brazil."[54]

The January 12, 1942, inauguration of the Hispanic Foundation murals was a formal ceremony attended by numerous art critics and diplomats. Although Portinari was still in Washington at this time, he did not attend.[55] In the ceremony, statements by Brazilian Ambassador Carlos Martins Pereira e Souza, Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs Nelson Rockefeller, and Director of the Foundation Lewis Hanke were broadcast short-wave to Brazil.

Before the murals' inauguration, MacLeish had written an important letter on January 3, 1942, to President Vargas in which he announced that Portinari's mission had been completed:

> I wish to thank you, therefore, on behalf of all those who see the paintings for your foresight and generosity in initiating this project whose happy realization will cement more surely than ever the close harmony and friendship that unites our great republics.[56]

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[54] Lewis Hanke, Memorandum, 11 December 1941.

[55] The reasons why Portinari chose not to attend are unclear. João Candido Portinari, the artist's son, has mentioned that his father might have been reacting against the formality of the occasion; Portinari may also have reacted against the fact that no African Americans were invited or included in this ceremony. João Candido Portinari, personal interview, 25 January 1994.

[56] Archibald MacLeish, letter to Getúlio Vargas, 3 January 1942, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C. This letter was translated into Portuguese and published in Brazilian journals.

After the inauguration, Portinari's art continued to play a role in the cultural diplomacy between these two countries as the publicity of the murals increased in the United States, especially after August of 1942, when Brazil joined the Allies in declaring war against the Axis powers. One of the murals, Entry into the Forest (Fig. 4), was featured in a November, 1942 Fortune magazine story entitled "Brazil: The New Ally," and was described as a scene "comparable to the opening of our West."[57] In addition, a view of the Library of Congress murals was included in the article "Wartime Washington," in the September, 1943 edition of The National Geographic Magazine. This view was featured as "Scenes Common to all the Americas" (Fig. 1).[58] Many other magazines and journals published reviews and reproductions of the Hispanic Foundation murals in which they frequently referred to the fact that Brazil had become an ally.[59] Later in 1942, Gustavo Capanema, Brazil's Minister of Education, awarded a

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[57] "Brazil: The New Ally," Fortune 26.5 (November 1942): 107. Included in this article were other reproductions of earlier works by Portinari as well as a reproduction of a movie still from Disney's Saludos featuring cartoon characters Donald Duck and Zé Carioca.

[58] Nicholas, William H. "Wartime Washington," The National Geographic Magazine 84.3 (September 1943): 269.

[59] An example is Chandler de Brossard, "Brazilian Murals at Washington, D. C." The Studio (November 1942): 162. In the introduction, de Brossard stated: "It is fitting that The Studio should be enabled to pay tribute to our newest Ally- Brazil- by reproducing work of one of its most prominent artists...."

commission to George Biddle and Helen Sardeau to decorate the walls of the National Library in Rio de Janeiro with mural and relief panels, thus sealing the cultural exchange between Brazil the United States.[60]

Portinari's Hispanic Foundation murals evolved within the politically charged atmosphere of Pan-Americanism. Furthermore, the inauguration of the murals played a role within diplomatic relations between the United States and Brazil. In an effort to establish these Pan-American documents in a more inclusive art historical framework, the murals will be re-examined in the following perspectives: as transitional for Portinari's artistic development; in the context of a larger Pan-American mural movement; as reflective of the artist's socialist agenda; and as works of art which, in the context of Pan-Americanism, would be received as a unified anti-Fascist expression of a Pan-American identity.

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60 See Aracy A. Amaral, Arte para quê? A preocupação social na arte brasileira, 1930-1970 (São Paulo: Nobel, 1987) : 63. See also "Hired by Brazil," Art Digest July 1942: 18.

Chapter III
A Re-Examination of Portinari's New World Murals

In October, 1941, after Portinari started to paint the murals, he spoke to Robert C. Smith about the expressed curiosity in Brazil regarding the murals' subject matter. Because of this he wished to send photographs of some preliminary sketches to O Jornal, one of the most popular newspapers in Rio de Janeiro. He also asked Smith to write an accompanying statement about the mural project that would be published with these photographs. In a memorandum to MacLeish, Smith related Portinari's wishes and attached his prepared statement for the Librarian to review, adding, "I hope that you will approve the idea because I think it is important that the Brazilians know right away how we feel and what we have done."[61] Smith's statement incorporated his hope for the murals' future Pan-American significance:

> In these murals the Hispanic Foundation will have an instrument for cultural understanding between the American republics as powerful as all its written works of literature and history and one composed in a language clear to all who come to visit it. Artistically, these rooms will possess a value which in our time public buildings decorated by Mexican artists first enjoyed and which in the past was given

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[61] Robert C. Smith, Memorandum to Archibald MacLeish, 24 October 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C. The memorandum found in Washington, D. C. was not complete; the other half of Smith's memorandum, his actual statement of the same date, was located by the author in Rio de Janeiro.

> to churches and palaces of Europe as theatres of immortal painting.[62]

Smith's statement indicates the formidable task that Portinari faced when he was asked to create all encompassing scenes of colonization that would function as an "instrument for cultural understanding." His awareness of the import of this task is indicated by his reference to the commission as "the greatest responsibility of my life."[63] The charge to represent Latin American culture in the New World was certainly a challenge for the Brazilian artist, and one that clearly influenced the murals' style. These New World murals reveal his attempt to create forms which could convey the universality needed for such an artistic treaty.

As discussed in the preceding chapters, the Library of Congress murals functioned as an inter-American cultural collaboration during the intensely political era of Pan-Americanism. In an effort to better understand and establish Portinari's murals within a more inclusive art historical framework, this chapter will further examine these murals as 1) stylistically transitional for Portinari's artistic development, 2) part of a greater Pan-

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[62] Robert C. Smith, Memorandum to Archibald MacLeish, 24 October 1941, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro.

[63] Candido Portinari, letter to Archibald MacLeish, 23 October 1941, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol. Portinari wrote to MacLeish to acknowledge receipt of the money that had finally been secured through the American government.

American mural movement, and 3) related not only to Pan-Americanism, but to the predominant political currents of Marxism, Communism and anti-Fascism.

Following an introductory description of Portinari's New World murals, this study will discuss the artist's stylistic background and working methods in connection to these works. This chapter will then evaluate the larger mural movement that was already well established within the Americas, addressing the predominant political ideologies of many artists at this time.

After considering these perspectives, this re-examination of the Library of Congress murals will analyze and interpret each of the four works. This series of investigations will incorporate stylistic and iconographical interpretations of both the preliminary studies and finished murals in light of the prescribed themes and Portinari's past imagery.

Portinari's New World Murals

After a number of preliminary sketches and discussions with MacLeish and Smith, Portinari prepared four gouache studies that were approved by the Librarian and the Architect of the Capitol. The overall subject matter concentrated on the beginnings of Latin American history, covering three basic historical themes: discovery and conquest; education; and economic development. Moreover,

these scenes applied not only to Brazil, but also to other areas of Central and South America. Executed in approximately seven weeks from the middle of October to early December, 1941, in the two vestibules that precede the main vaulted reading room (Fig. 2), Portinari's scenes of the colonization of Latin America begin with Discovery of the Land, (10 1/2 x 10 1/2 ft., Fig. 3), and Entry into the Forest, (10 1/2 x 14 1/3 ft., Fig. 4). These scenes greet viewers entering the Hispanic Foundation. In the second vestibule are the two slightly larger murals: Teaching of the Indians (15 3/4 x 15 1/4 ft., Fig. 5) and Mining of Gold (15 3/4 x 15 1/4 ft., Fig. 6). Portinari chose to paint the murals as frescoes, applying tempera on dry plaster, or *a secco*, because this approach allowed him more freedom for experimentation.

Portinari's Stylistic Background and Working Methods

As is the case with many Latin American modern artists, it is difficult to classify Portinari's work within any predominantly modern stylistic movement. Since he has been historically recognized as a Latin American muralist, the artist has been generally referred to as a Social Realist. However, his works throughout the 1930s and early 1940s display such modernist influences as

surrealism, expressionism, and primitivism.[64] Although there is a recognizable Social Realist content and style in Portinari's 1936-39 Ministry of Education series Ciclos Econômicos Brasileiros (Fig. 7), the majority of his paintings throughout the 1930s and early 1940s were experimental and diverse in both style and technique.

The Library of Congress murals were transitional for Portinari's artistic development in the use of an increased monumental scale and incorporation of a number of stylistic devices prevalent in his work of the 1930s and early 1940s. These include the schematization and distortion of human figures, as in his 1933 Morro (Fig. 8); surrealist and sometimes metaphysical landscapes as in the otherworldly atmospheres of Espantalho (Fig. 9) and Cruzão do Sul (Fig. 10), both of 1940; and an expert use of line either to indicate movement as in the 1940 Return from the Fair (Fig. 11), or to contrast linear and painterly elements as in his 1935 Portrait of Paulo Rossi Osir (Fig. 12), which is influenced by the art of Amedeo Modigiliani.

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[64] This categorization of Portinari as a "Brazilian Diego Rivera" is often found in writings by North American historians and critics. Perhaps this approach is rooted in the tendency of U. S. art critics and historians during the late 1930s and 1940s to view the Brazilian artist as a refreshingly non-didactic Latin American muralist. Although Eva Cockcroft has discussed this critical reaction in the U. S., she categorizes Portinari as a "nationalistic realist." See Cockcroft, The Latin American Spirit, 191. See also Dawn Ades, Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1820-1980 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Ades catalogues Portinari within a chapter on "Indigenous Social Realism."

In terms of his wide ranging techniques, it is necessary to acknowledge Portinari's study at the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes (ENBA) in Rio de Janeiro during the 1920s, a time in which the academic tradition of neo-classicism still prevailed.[65] This academic atmosphere was conservative in comparison to the work of such early Brazilian modernists in São Paulo, such as Tarsila do Amaral, who in 1924 was creating such modernist pieces as Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil (Fig. 13). An example of the ENBA's intolerance for any stylistic experimentation occurred this same year, when the Salon of the ENBA rejected Portinari's impressionist work, Baile na Roça (Fig. 14), as too experimental and crude in its style.[66] Portinari's background in this academic tradition provided him with solid technical skills with which to experiment, and react against, in his search for new forms of expression.

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[65] In 1816, a year after Brazil had been elevated from the status of colony to kingdom, Dom João sent a French artistic mission to Brazil, which in 1820 established the French-staffed Academia de Belas Artes, with such instructors as Jean Baptiste Debret, a former pupil of Jacques-Louis David. See Walter Zanini, ed., História Geral da Arte no Brasil vol. 1 (São Paulo: Instituto Walther Moreira Salles, 1983) 383-387.

[66] After the 1924 painting was rejected by the Salon, Portinari quickly sold the work, never seeing it again the rest of his life. The artist regretted selling his first painting which portrayed a scene of the Brazilian interior. However, years after his death, the work was discovered by the artist's son and the Projeto Portinari. Furthermore, this painting is also significant because it was one of his earliest works to feature an African Brazilian figure.

As a continuation of a greater search for a modern Brazilian cultural identity, initiated by an earlier wave of Brazilian modernists such as Tarsila do Amaral, Lasar Segall, and Emiliano di Calvacanti, Portinari focused on the unique ethnic cultures of Brazil as a defining quality of the country. In his paintings of the 1930s, Portinari extensively explored Brazilian themes, particularly through a number of portrayals of Brazil's poor workers, emphasizing their diverse ethnic backgrounds. Throughout this decade, Portinari concurrently developed a mural style in which he created recognizable and almost archetypal figures of Brazilian workers as can be seen in his 1935 Café (Fig. 15) as well as in the 1936-39 series of the economic cycles of Brazil for the Ministry of Education (Fig. 7).

Portinari's emphasis on ethnic diversity continued in his mural work for the Library of Congress, but in a different manner than in his Ministry of Education series. Through numerous preparatory studies for these twelve frescoes, the artist established certain compositional frameworks for monumental depictions of figures. In this series of murals, the focus is on carefully arranged figures of workers, enhanced by the incorporation of mostly flat backgrounds. The style of this series can be classified as Social Realist in its idealized portrayals of Brazilian workers as well as in its stylistic similarities

to other muralists at the time. For example, the Ministry of Education series is reminiscent of Diego Rivera's scenes of Mexican peasants of the late 1920s. Rivera's paintings exhibit a common simplicity and arrangement of static figures, such as his Dance in Tehuantepec (1928) (Fig. 16), a version of his "La Zandunga" fresco in the Secretary of Public Education Building in Mexico City. However, unlike Rivera, who increasingly incorporated cubist compositions within his murals, complicating his multi-planar narratives with an increased number of figures and scenes, Portinari retained a simplicity of composition and minimum number of figures in his subsequent murals, including the Hispanic Foundation scenes.

Portinari began working on all these colonial scenes by directly referring to previous pieces. In particular, he mined past compositional frameworks and figural prototypes from his Ministry of Education series. To varying degree in all the Library of Congress scenes, Portinari dramatically altered his format from his initial sketches to the four final color gouache studies that were submitted for approval. These changes in composition resulted primarily from the artist's search for formats possessing more defined backgrounds in which to place his figural arrangements.

Portinari developed a more experimental approach within this new environment as he increasingly recognized

the differences of context between the Ministry of Education and the Library of Congress. In addition to being asked to execute monumental scenes on a larger scale than he had previously done, Portinari was also faced with a very different architectural framework than the Ministry of Education in Rio.

As part of the Brazilian government's greater quest for modernity, the Ministry of Education Building had been constructed through a commission of leading Brazilian architects, and based on a preliminary plan by Le Corbusier.[67] By contrast, the Hispanic Room's Spanish Renaissance architectural environment presented an entirely different setting, a factor in Portinari's stylistic choices. His increased attention to background, for example, was an attempt to achieve a more traditional, illusionistic setting for the episodes of colonization, so the scenes might better correspond with the traditional architectural style of the Hispanic Room.

As part of an incorporation of his previous painting styles of the 1930s, Portinari focused his attention toward the depictions of backgrounds in the Hispanic Foundation scenes. For the 1936-39 Ministry of Education series, he had composed mostly flat backgrounds, organized by a few intersecting planes, and only descriptive enough to

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[67] This building in Rio de Janeiro is now designated as the "Palácio da Cultura."

emphasize the figural depictions. However, in the Library of Congress scenes, there is increased attention to spacial depth, descriptive details, and a sense of atmosphere. An especially surrealistic quality pervades the backgrounds of Entry into the Forest (Fig. 4) and Teaching of the Indians (Fig. 5), conveying a non-specific and more universal atmosphere.

Another innovation in the Library of Congress murals is Portinari's representations of human figures. Unlike the uniform, realistic representations of people in the Ministry of Education murals, the characters of the Hispanic Foundation murals vary in their stylistic portrayals, as some figures are more abstracted in their facial features and overall form. Through a combination of realism and abstraction, Portinari worked to both generalize and individualize his figures in all four colonial scenes. Furthermore, the artist also employed a contrast of textures in both his figures and background that is not seen in the Ministry of Education series. As will be described, his contrasts between sketchy, two-dimensional elements and solid, sculptural forms served to enhance his narrative, indicating the varying levels of emphasis and hierarchical significance of his characters and settings. Such departures in the artist's formal approach to mural painting altered the content the Library of Congress scenes, revealing an attempt at a more

universal representation of Latin America and a more individual form of artistic expression.

A Pan-American Mural Movement: Common Goals and Ideologies

By the late 1930s, mural painting in the United States had become an accepted modern art form. In both Regionalism and Social Realism, it had become a means for claiming and defining this country's identity. Viewed by many as as United States artistic renaissance, murals were considered a way in which to narrate, to criticize, and even to create this nation's history. In this search for an uniquely nationalistic imagery, some important contributors were Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, Reginald Marsh, Stuart Davis, and Ben Shahn.

Even though the direct influence and example of the earlier Mexican mural renaissance has been acknowledged in passing as the model for the development of government funding of the arts in the United States, the "American" mural movement was actually "Pan-American" at its very inception.[68]

The mural movement that took root in Mexico and spread to the United States had an impact that extended beyond Central and North America. Just as the artists of the

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[68] In a 1933 proposal to Roosevelt for a government sponsored public art program, George Biddle directly referred to the example that had been set by the Mexican government. See Cockcroft, The Latin American Spirit, 189.

United States looked to the Mexican muralists for inspiration for such government sponsored programs as the Works Progress Administration (WPA), some South American countries, such as Brazil, looked to both the Mexican muralists and the United States government art programs as examples of modern painting. In 1934, concurrent with the beginnings of the WPA program, Portinari stated in an interview for the Brazilian journal Diário de São Paulo that he thought modern painting tended towards muralism and he criticized the government of Brazil for not taking an active interest in art:

> In Mexico and in the United States [it] has already been many years [in which] this tendency is a reality, and in other countries the same movement works...to instill the painting [with] its sense of the masses....Naturally, in Brazil, [a] country in formation, the artist has no possibilities.... Everything here remains to be done, with only a few exceptions. And the cause of all this is [that] the government is still obstinate at not having, as can be observed in Mexico, a direct interest in matters of art.[69]

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69 "Exposição de pintura Candido Portinari," Diário de São Paulo 21 Nov. 1934. This statement by Portinari was located by the author in Portinari: vou pintar aquela gente com aquela roupa e com aquela cor. (Brasil: Projeto Portinari: Marval, n. d.) 90. Trans. by author: *"No México e nos Estados Unidos já há muitos anos essa tendência é uma realidade, e noutros países se opera o mesmo movimento, que há de impôr a pintura o seu sentido de massa...Naturalmente, no Brasil, país em formação, o artista não tem possibilidades...Tudo aqui está por fazer, havendo apenas alguns casos excepcionais. E a causa disso tudo é ainda o governo, que se obstina a não ter, como no México se observa, interesse direto pelas coisas da arte...."* In July of the following year, Portinari was contracted to teach mural and easel painting for the newly formed Universidade Distrito Federal in Rio.

Beginning in the 1930s and extending throughout the 1940s, a Pan-American mural movement evolved into a viable means of expression for artists in nations throughout Latin America which were searching for a modern identity. Artists such as Eduardo Riofrío Kingman and Osvaldo Guayasamín of Ecuador, Héctor Poleo of Venezuela, and Antonio Berni of Argentina were all affected by Mexican murals, and were influential in the development of murals in their respective countries.[70]

Although the political contexts, cultural backgrounds and artistic interests during the 1930s and 1940s varied greatly throughout different nations of North, Central and South America, initially there were common goals, similar artistic sources and influences, as well as political ideologies shared by many artists throughout the Americas. For example, there was the shared interest in creating a public art that, as Portinari stated, could instill a "sense of the masses." Crosscurrents of modernist styles of Europe and the Americas, combined with the rich tradition of the Italian Renaissance, provided similar sources and influences from which to propagate new Pan-American imagery. In addition to reflecting what was the common intellectual and incipient political atmosphere of Marxism at this time, a generally acknowledged necessity for public

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[70] See Cockcroft, The Latin American Spirit, 191-201. See also Lucie-Smith, 69-77. The influence of Mexican muralism on other Latin American artists is discussed by these two art historians.

art revealed a further desire throughout the Americas to establish a cultural history, or to create, as Robert C. Smith expressed, "theatres of immortal painting." This far-reaching objective for public art reflected, as can be perceived in Portinari's Library of Congress murals, a common Pan-American quest for a modern cultural identity apart from Europe.

One of the primary sources for many of these modern muralists, and particularly for Portinari in his Library of Congress scenes, were the early Italian Renaissance painters, especially frescoes by such 14th- and 15th-century artists as Piero della Francesca, Giotto and Fra Angelico. Although such painters had long been considered "Italian primitives," certain artists of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, through appreciation and application of early Italian Renaissance styles, helped to catalyze a revival of this art.[71] The so-called primitive quality of early Italian Renaissance art correlated with the growing interest in primitivism, particularly in the modernist exploration of two-

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[71] As art historians such as Bruce Cole have pointed out, late nineteenth century painters such as Seurat and Cézanne, in a search for a greater organization in painting, prompted a rediscovery and new appreciation for Piero della Francesca. Cole also pointed out that Piero's highly ordered works would have an impact on the development of Cubism and thus the art of the twentieth century. He further acknowledged the influence of early 20th century publications by Bernard Berenson and Roberto Longhi on the Italian artist. See Bruce Cole, Piero della Francesca: Tradition and Innovation in Renaissance Art (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) 153-156.

dimensional, abstract forms. The work of 20th century muralists reinforced this revival, and an increased attention to the mural movements contributed to a greater interest in the art of the early Italian Renaissance within the field of American art.[72]

In Portinari's Library of Congress murals, for example, there appears to be a more direct referral to the styles of early Italian painting than the artist had displayed before, particularly to the art of Giotto and Piero della Francesca. For example, Portinari's limited number of posed figures and dramatic use of gesture found in Entry into the Forest (Fig. 4), as well as in Mining of Gold (Fig. 6) are reminiscent of Giotto's narrative frescoes of the 14th century. Also, in Entry into the Forest, one can sense the presence of Piero della Francesca in the static quality of Portinari's posed figures which are placed within highly organized backgrounds. Additionally, throughout the Library of Congress murals, the effect of dry fresco's color and luminosity suggests

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[72] In an examination of the citations of Piero della Francesca, Fra Angelico and Giotto (including reproductions) found listed in The Art Index between January 1929 and September 1941, all three artists were cited regularly in many publications, and predominantly in the following: American Magazine of Art, Art Digest, Art News, Art Bulletin, Apollo, Burlington Magazine, and Connoisseur. The total number of citations for each artist during these years is as follows: Giotto, 92; Piero, 55; and Fra Angelico, 53.

the work of Giotto as well as that of other early Italian Renaissance painters.[73]

As scholars such as Fabris have discussed, Portinari's common stylistic sources with the Mexican muralists are to be found not only in the realm of early Italian mural painting, but also occur in their common interest in European contemporary modernism. Although some Mexican muralists' works, such as those of Rivera, were more directly Cubist in their compositions than those of Portinari, the art of many European modernists such as Giorgio Di Chirico, Marc Chagall, Amedeo Modigiliani, and Henri Matisse were integrated into a "Pan-American" style.

Another important similarity among many practitioners of this greater Pan-American mural movement are their strong political ideologies. Throughout the 1930s, Marxist ideology is to be found in the art of many American artists, particularly in their quest for a populist art. Mexican artists such as Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siquieros were members of the Communist party and had worked within Mexico and abroad to establish proletarian mural scenes, often indicting the capitalist imperialism of their time. The Mexican muralists' ideological influence on muralism throughout the Americas was significant in that it

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[73] Other aspects in a consideration of the Brazilian artist's inclination towards an early Italian Renaissance sensibility could be further related to Portinari's trip to Italy between 1929-1931, and also that he was the child of Italian immigrant parents.

established a connection between art and politics that set a standard for expression throughout the United States and Latin America.

Through organizations in the United States such as the Artists' Union, with its publication, Art Front, as well as the exhibitions and publications fostered by the American Artists Congress, artists worked towards a greater political awareness, often stressing their Communist ideology and thus contributing to a greater social conscience of the time.[74]

Among Latin American muralists, Portinari has consistently been ignored in considerations of the prevalent political ideologies found within the artistic community of this time. Portinari's art and its possible political implications have apparently been re-conceived to correlate with the political agenda of Pan-Americanism. This is perhaps related to the way in which the artist was predominantly perceived in the early 1940s, when he had gained much recognition in the United States. The majority of North American art critics viewed his work as a welcome Latin alternative to the more politically assertive and propagandistic works of the famous Mexican muralists Rivera, Orozco and Siquieros. In his catalogue essay for

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[74] In particular, the Artist's Union was an outgrowth of the John Reed clubs and had many leaders who were Communists.

Portinari's MOMA exhibition of 1940, Robert C. Smith affirmed this view of Portinari:

> Unlike Rivera and the Mexicans he has no didactic social message to expound. But what he has observed he states with sympathy and dignity, untouched by propaganda. Upon such a firm basis Brazilian painting should continue to grow in importance and to play an increasingly significant role in the future art of Pan-America.[75]

During the 1930s and early 1940s, Portinari did not work in either a cultural or ideological vacuum, but among the widespread influences of Marxism and Communism within the field of art. The artist created socially critical paintings, which, within the socialist currents of a Pan-American mural movement, were politically relevant.[76] Furthermore, throughout this period, Portinari was actively interested in what artists from other countries were creating.[77]

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[75] Robert C. Smith, "The Art of Candido Portinari," Portinari of Brazil (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1940) 12. Smith's association of Portinari's propaganda-free style with a "firm basis" for Pan-American art suggests that the artist's work was perceived as being capable of fulfilling the need for a culturally unifying art in the Western Hemisphere.

[76] Although Fabris has acknowledged a common intellectual atmosphere of Marxism among the artists of North and South America, she has designated Portinari's paintings as being socially critical, and not political. Fabris has presented this evaluation in the context of the Mexican muralists, who worked from a very different historical perspective and political environment than artists in Brazil. In her study, Fabris certainly discusses the artist in the context of modern Brazilian culture, but there is little consideration of the artist within the history of Brazilian art. Fabris, 79-81.

[77] It should not be forgotten that his friend and frequent correspondent Rockwell Kent was an active Communist, involved in various political art organizations of the 1930s. Furthermore, Portinari's friend Florence Horn often kept the Brazilian artist

Factors to consider in a re-evaluation of his participation in a politically permeated Pan-American mural movement bordering on Marxism are his declared solidarity with common goals of the mural movements in Mexico and the United States, a visual style based on themes of Brazilian workers, which can be construed as depictions of a Brazilian proletariat, and a commitment to portraying the ethnic diversity of Brazil, especially validating the contributions of African Brazilians within this country's development.[78] As such, his Library of Congress murals need to be considered in light of these political influences and

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updated on issues pertaining to American art. In letters to the artist, she occasionally mentioned catalogues and magazines she intended to mail to him. In a letter in 1939, Horn said that "I am also sending you a catalogue of Thomas Benton's show, and some reproductions in color of modern paintings issued by the museums...." Florence Horn, letter to Candido Portinari, 29 May 1939, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro. In another letter of 1939, she wrote that "I am sending you today, by ship, the copy of the New York issue [Fortune?] containing some marvelous color reproductions of modern U. S. painters. (I am going to send you things like this whenever they are available because I know you want to see what other men are doing)." Florence Horn, letter to Candido Portinari, June 1939, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro.

[78] One possible reason for his not attending the inauguration of the Library of Congress murals was to protest against the absence of African Americans at the ceremony. It should be added that the artist's work was exhibited at Howard University's Art Gallery in the Spring of 1941. Alonzo J. Aden, who was the the curator of the Gallery, wrote to Portinari a year earlier recognizing the artist's "interest in issues connected to the quests of the negro...," and expressed his thanks for "the uncommon interest" that Portinari "demonstrated towards the Art Gallery at Howard University...." Alonzo J. Aden, letter to Candido Portinari, 22 November 1940, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro. This letter was quoted within Portinari: vou pintar aquela gente com aquela roupa e com aquela cor, (Brasil: Projeto Portinari, Marval, n. d.) 121. Trans. by author: *"...seu interesse por assuntos ligados à questãs do negro...interesse incomum que o senhor demonstrou pela Galeria de Arte da Universidade de Howard..."*

ideologies that were prevalent within a greater Pan-American mural movement.

Also, as established in the preceding chapters, the Library of Congress murals were created within an agenda of Pan-Americanism and were Pan-American works by virtue of their commission and subject matter. Furthermore, during the time surrounding World War II, the atmosphere of Pan-Americanism was increasingly paralleled by a growing current of anti-Fascism, which allowed for compromise and alliances between the ideologies of Marxism, Communism and capitalism.

Considering these prevalent political currents surrounding the Hispanic Foundation murals, Portinari's works require re-examination through two significant contexts: first, as an expression of the artist's socialist perspective, which was a continuation of a predominantly Marxist influenced Pan-American mural movement; and, second, as speaking to the Pan-American spirit of the time, being received not only as a cultural reinforcement of Pan-Americanism, but as a hemispheric unity that opposed Fascism.

The Hispanic Foundation Murals: Analysis and Interpretation

One of the most striking aspects of Portinari's interpretations of the colonization of Latin America is the attempt to present a perspective of history that does not

herald a specific historical occurrence, but reveals an informal look at colonial culture. Without any glorification of European colonization, the monumental scenes possess an epic and heroic quality in a narrative of the common man. Moreover, they are testaments to a diverse Pan-American proletariat and tributes to the ethnic diversity of workers in the Americas.

Additionally, Portinari painted four murals which, in their focus on ethnic representation, reflect a greater quest for a Pan-American multi-ethnic identity that would differentiate the diversity of peoples in the Americas from a relative homogeneity of Europeans.

Discovery of the Land

In Discovery of the Land (Fig. 3), a work dominated by a dramatic sense of movement and enhanced by a geometric composition of intersecting diagonal and vertical forms, the focus is on the two sailors in the foreground who are manning the ship, not on the actual discovery seen in the background. By his placement of these powerful figures, Portinari indicated that the historical event of discovery is of secondary importance in his narrative. As art historian Clarival do Prado Valladares has commented, this placement "inverts the hierarchy in relation to the

importance of the painting."[79] Of all four murals, the figures of the anonymous sailors most clearly resemble Portinari's earlier idealizations of Brazil's poor workers.

There are two preparatory studies for this mural. The first, a small pencil sketch (Fig. 17), portrays a hastily drawn group of ships and is not related to the final compositions of either the gouache study or the finished mural. In his search for a scenario depicting the arrival of colonial explorers, the first episode faced by visitors to the Hispanic Room, Portinari quickly discarded this setting in favor of a scene focusing on the perspective of the everyday worker.

In the second study (Fig. 18), Portinari established the composition of the two nameless sailors in the foreground, who mirror each other as they hoist the ship's sail. Valladares has pointed out a particularly Brazilian detail within this sketch: the faint outline of Rio's Sugar Loaf mountain in the distant horizon of the discovered land.[80]

The loose, curvilinear quality that Portinari employed for this gouache was further substantiated in the finished mural to convey a windy atmosphere. His use of line also

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[79] Clarival do Prado Valladares. Análise Iconográfica da Pintura Monumental de Portinari nos Estados Unidos (Rio de Janeiro: Museu Nacional de Belas-Artes, 1975) 4.

[80] Valladares, 4. Valladares' study is useful primarily because of his breakdown of the subtle Brazilian elements and references that Portinari incorporated into the studies and murals

serves to differentiate between the movement of the sailors and the static series of figures in the background, further enhancing the significance of the sailor's work. In his smaller paintings, Portinari created a similar dramatic fluidity of line, but he had never before managed to create such an effect on a monumental scale. In this mural, one gets the impression that the artist enlarged predominant features of his color sketch, such as the incorporation of unfinished and outlined forms, in order to enhance the scene's informality. Furthermore, this informal quality effectively contrasts with the classical and controlled formality of the architectural context of not only the Hispanic Room, but of the Library of Congress.

Another important element within this scene is the emphasis on the central figure's ethnicity. Portinari's concentration on ethnic features is a unifying element throughout all four murals and had been for a majority of his previous works. As Fabris has pointed out, the figure that dominates this composition is "not white, or European, but a black man, which seems to reaffirm the intrinsic connection that Portinari established in his previous works between the land of the Americas and the struggle of the black man."[81] Valladares has expressed a more Brazilian

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[81] Fabris, 54. Trans. by author: *"não é branco, o europeu, mas um negro, o que parece reafirmar a ligação intrínseca que Portinari estabelecera, já nas obras anteriores, entre a terra americana e o esforço do negro."*

interpretation of this artist's predominant portrayal of an African American by suggesting that "Portinari wanted...the face of Brazil, through the face of its discovery, to be the same as it is in all of its destiny."[82]

Of the four murals, Discovery of the Land contains the most heroic portrayal through the protagonist (Fig. 19), whose strength is pronounced through the increased proportions and sculptural quality of his arms and feet. In 1943, Smith described this enlarged and sculptural emphasis of this worker's hands and feet as a stylistic effect employed to contrast with the looser linear quality of the rest of the piece.[83]

The use of exaggeration was an important stylistic element within Portinari's previous portrayals of Brazilian workers. This tendency to exaggerate the arms, hands and feet of his figures, can be seen in his works of the 1930s, such as the 1934 O Lavrador de Café (Fig. 20), 1935 Café (Fig. 15) and the numerous drawings of the late 1930s for the Ministry of Education murals in Rio de Janeiro. For example, in a preparatory study for a mural scene of tobacco planters, exaggerations can be seen in the right figure which clasps a drinking vessel with upraised arms

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82 Valladares, 4. Trans. by author: *"Portinari quis por a face do Brasil, na face de sua descoberta, assim como ela é em todo seu destino."*

83 Robert C. Smith, Murals by Cândido Portinari in the Hispanic Foundation of the Library of Congress (Washington, D. C. : United States Government Printing Office, 1943) 12-13.

(Fig. 21). This particular portrayal of a worker in this Ministry of Education sketch anticipates the sailor in Discovery of the Land. In an earlier sketch for this same tobacco scene (Fig. 22), one can see a similar nameless prototype for Portinari's future protagonist sailor.

In Brazil, Portinari was in fact often ridiculed in the press as the "painter of big feet." A later cartoon caricature of 1942, among other interesting satirical details, depicts the artist as having big feet himself, as he paints in his studio (Fig. 23).[84] The artist explained the artistic tendency as a homage to his childhood remembrances of workers on the coffee plantations, recalling them as having feet "that have suffered with many, many kilometers of marching. Feet that only saints have."[85]

Portinari's inclination towards expressive exaggeration reinforced a sense of power in his figures of Brazilian or Pan-American workers. Furthermore, this stylistic feature had also been employed by other muralists working in the 1930s such as Thomas Hart Benton's African

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84 "O Pintor PORTINARI numa caricatura de Alvarus," Vamos Ler 5 November 1942: 18.

85 Trans. by author: *"Sofridos com muitos e muitos quilômetros de marcha. Pés que só os santos tem."* Candido Portinari. Portinari, o menino de Brodósqui; retalhos de minha vida de infância Intro. by João Candido Portinari. (Rio de Janeiro: Livroarte, 1979) 52-3. This quote was located by the author in Portinari: vou pintar aquela gente com aquela roupa e com aquela cor (Brasil: Projeto Portinari: Marval, n. d.) 110.

American figure in his 1932 painting Arts of the South (Fig. 24).

Fabris has discussed Portinari's emphasis on the Brazilian worker through his figures' arms and feet as a valid comparison to be made with similar methods employed by the Mexican muralists, especially David Alfaro Siquieros, indicating a similar ideological orientation between the two artists:

> ...Siquieros emphasized the arm and hand of his figures to see in them a symbol of the dignity of manual labor. Portinari would do the same in the majority of his paintings of a social nature, emphasizing, through an expressive deformation, the force of the Brazilian worker...[86]

In this discussion, Fabris clarifies this use of "expressive deformation" as not just an appropriation on Portinari's part, but a reflection of similar intellectual atmospheres and evidence of a greater social and political conscience of artists throughout the Americas at this time.

Entry into the Forest

For the second episode of Portinari's colonial narrative, the prescribed subject matter was the epic of conquest in Latin America. Portinari's Entry into the

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[86] Fabris, 79. Trans. by author: *"...Siquieros enfatiza o braço e a mão de suas figuras por ver neles o símbolo da dignidade do trabalho manual. Portinari fará o mesmo na maioria de suas pinturas de cunho social, enfatizando, através da deformação expressiva, a força do trabalhador brasileiro..."*

Forest (Fig. 4), a depiction of colonial explorers, is partially based on the westward expansion of the *bandeirantes*. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was a great deal of westward expansion in Brazil that ultimately claimed a colossal area of South America where there were groups called *bandeiras*. Their members, *bandeirantes*, were the adventurous explorers, often from varying racial backgrounds, who found a certain freedom in their exploits that moved them west into the interior, mainly by foot and canoe.[87] In a letter to Portinari before he arrived in the United States, Smith had suggested that the subject of Brazil's "bandeira movement" would provide an ideal way of portraying the epic of territorial conquest.[88]

In contrast to the intensity of movement in the mural's scene of colonial discovery, Entry into the Forest is static. Four figures are artificially posed to reinforce the strong horizontals and verticals making up the forest background. Of these four men, a red bearded explorer

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[87] For more information on this particular aspect of Brazilian history, see E. Bradford Burns, A History of Brazil, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) 55-57.

[88] Robert C. Smith, letter to Candido Portinari, 13 May 1941, Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro. It was an ideal topic because it excluded the possible necessity of depicting the more bloody conquests of the Spanish "conquistadores." After the murals were completed, Smith was the first to mention this mural in an essay in relation to Brazil's bandeira movement. Another writer, Mário Pedrosa, called the murals *Os Bandeirantes* in his 1943 article on the murals. Consequently, this title has occasionally been used to signify this particular work, especially in Brazilian publications.

stares out at the viewer, one of the few human figures to do so in the entire series. Perhaps the leader of this *bandeira*, he wears the typical attire of the *bandeirante*, loose clothing, broadbrimmed hat, and a gun clutched to his side.[89] Furthermore, his detailed face, clothes and contrapposto stance serve to differentiate him from the two standing men, whose faces are only partially visible and the foreshortened figure on the ground drinking water. A further point of contrast is the strange environment in which these explorers are pausing. Although there are naturalistic details in the portrayal of the animals, the red earth (typical in the interior of Brazil) is covered with patches of vegetation signified only by dabs of colored paint overlaid with curvilinear drawings that represent grass and flowers. To a certain degree, thes sketchy quality of Portinari's details is reminiscent of the style of Fra Angelico, specifically the Italian artist's use of short, light strokes of paint to depict grass and flowers in his Annunciation fresco (Fig. 25) at San Marco, Florence. Also, the contrasts of linear style and textural effect give a strange, other-worldly quality to the piece creating a space which appears to be both cartoonish and naturalistic.

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[89] Burns, 56.

The two preliminary studies for Entry into the Forest, are similar in composition. As in the two sailors of Discovery of the Land, both the ink sketch (Fig. 26) and the gouache study (Fig. 27), have two similar central *bandeirante* figures facing in opposite directions and placed in the foreground. Although the background in the final mural remains close to the surreal ambience of the studies, there is a noticeable change in type and arrangement of figures. The artist retained the prone, foreshortened figure and the outward facing explorer from the two preliminary studies, but he added two standing profile figures which Valladares has shown to be legacies of his earlier work in the late 1930s for the Ministry of Education.[90] A similar arrangement of two profile figures is found in the 1936-39 Ciclos Econômicos Brasileiros (Fig. 7) from the Ministry's series in which two figures stand guard in the second scene from the left, entitled O Gado, which depicts the cattle farmers of Brazil. A prototype for the left figure of Entry into the Forest can be seen in a nude figure drawing (Fig. 28), which was made in preparation for the Ministry of Education murals.

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[90] Valladares, 5-6. He also points out further Brazilian sources for this mural, such as the background landscape being derived from a design Portinari did as a decoration for a friend's house in Rio, the bandeirante from a study in writer Mário de Andrade's collection and the figure who drinks water from the stream was inspired from a painting at Rio's Museu de Belas-Artes, Bandeirantes by Henrique Bernardelli.

The simple recurrence of these two figures in the final mural add a complexity of meaning to the scene. Though these figures are posed away from the viewer, the direction they do face is more intriguing, especially in the context of territorial expansion. Do they confront the future of Latin America's expansion? Furthermore, upon considering similar past depictions by the artist, the two profile figures of Entry into the Forest are recognizably African American, contrasting with the white bearded *bandeirante*, and continuing Portinari's emphasis on the ethnic diversity within these colonial scenes. In addition, their anonymity echoes the two nameless sailors in Discovery of the Land and serves as a further testament by the artist to the work and contributions of African Americans for the historical development of Latin America. Also, the presence of these African American figures continue Portinari's socialist idealization of the workers, reinforcing an all inclusive portrayal of a Pan-American people.

Teaching of the Indians

In Teaching of the Indians (Fig. 5), which faces the reading room, Portinari continues his reversal of conventional interpretations. Differing from Entry into the Forest (Fig. 4), the composition is centrally focused with statuesque native women rather than men dominating the

piece in a classic pyramidal arrangement. The heavy sculptural quality of the native women is similar to Pablo Picasso's classically inspired sculptural figures of the 1920's, such as his 1921 Three Women at the Fountain (Fig. 29). In the center of Teaching of the Indians, a seated priest modestly addresses his students from a turned, profile position, while another priest stands to the right holding a native child. The artist's prominent placement of the posed natives in the center foreground of the scene is similar to Discovery of the Land in its unexpected shift of focus, making protagonists of nameless and previously ignored characters of history.

Having also been referred to as "Catechism," "Cultural Beginnings," and "Education of the Indians," this mural's designated theme is the most appropriate for the context of the Library of Congress because it signified the establishment of education in the New World. It was also the mural for which Portinari required four preliminary studies: two in ink, one in pencil, and a final color study in gouache.

As was the case with the preliminary studies for all the murals, Portinari began the preparatory process for this painting with a pre-conceived and traditional idea of colonial catechism. In his first sketch of this topic (Fig. 30), he referred to earlier studies of the same theme which he had proposed to the Ministry of Education, such as a

finished charcoal drawing of 1936-7 (Fig. 31).[91] These two studies have a similar composition with a seated priest on the right addressing a group of natives. Portinari abandoned this idea in the next three drawings for the Hispanic Foundation murals, all of which have a centrally composed group of figures with priests more integrated with native women. He induced a more humanistic and humble quality in his portrayal of the priests in these three studies by placing one in the lowered, middle position and another carrying a child to the right of the central group.

In the second ink (Fig. 32) and the third pencil (Fig. 33) sketches, Portinari began to make a more pronounced differentiation between the figures of priests and the figures of natives than he had depicted in past works. In both these depictions, the nude natives, who consist mostly of women and children, contrast with the robed priests. Averaging seven figures in each of these drawings, Portinari established the framework of a seated priest surrounded by three large native women. Additionally, in these two drawings, he began to differentiate between the European priests and the American natives through a slight schematization of the native's facial features. Portinari

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[91] Portinari prepared a number of studies for an unrealized mural scheme of the same theme which Valladares, in his 1975 study, mentioned. Before that, Smith had described them as bearing a "curious resemblance to those of the Mexican José Clemente Orozco's frescoes in the Dartmouth College Library." See Robert C. Smith, Murals by Cândido Portinari, 1943, 14.

had previously executed numerous studies exploring the ethnic features of the various races in Brazil, as in his Study of an Indian of 1938 (Fig. 34), but not to the degree found in this mural.

By the time Portinari arrived at the color gouache sketch (Fig. 35), the only feature that remained from the Ministry of Education study was a figure carrying a basket of fruit on its head. Another change made in the color study from the earlier drawings was putting clothing on the natives. Also, Portinari established the setting of a coastal settlement with the distant background of an ocean, a schematized depiction of mountains, and the construction of a building. In previous drawings the artist had included a small representation of a church, which is left out of the color study. In fact, there are no overt Christian symbols of any kind in either the gouache work or the final mural, except for the priests. However, in these scenes, Valladares has pointed out allusions to the Jesuits who went to Brazil in the sixteenth century on a mission to educate and convert the native population of Brazil. Through his portrayals of the priests with children, Portinari specifically referred to the Brazilian religious figures São José and Santo Antônio.[92] In fact, he had painted similar imagery before as seen in his 1940-41 St.

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[92] Valladares, 6-7. Valladares mentioned other Brazilian imagery such as the *cabaça*, or gourd, and the *pilão*, the wooden crusher to the right of the ladder.

Anthony (Fig. 36), which was part of a series he painted in his family's house in Brodowski.

Portinari's decision not to use Christian icons and symbols in a scene depicting colonial catechism reflects a socialist approach to providing an art for the masses, free of didacticism and religious implications. Furthermore, the reference to the liberal and more secularly minded Jesuits is appropriate in consideration of Portinari's past humanistic expressions in his paintings of social concern. Also, in a Pan-Americanist reading of the mural, the artist's lack of specific religious symbols could be conceived as a reinforcement of the United States government's tenet of religious tolerance.

In the finished mural, Portinari's stress on the ethnicity of the native figures became even more stylized than in the preliminary works. The pronounced disparity between the delineated features of the standing priest's worried expression and the almost obliterated features of the natives' faces (Fig. 37) leaves the viewer with questions about Portinari's intended implications. Through a stylization bordering on caricature, the artist appeared to be criticizing the subject matter he was asked to represent, especially in light of the overall humanistic quality that connects the four murals. These deliberate exaggerations in the portrayals of the native people

differ greatly from what had been Portinari's customary, idealized approach to representing the various races of Brazil. In Teaching of the Indians, Portinari's incorporation of contrast between abstract and realistic facial depictions of his figures revealed the artist's discovery of varying possibilities for figural representation, an element explored in these murals and continued in his works of the 1940s and 1950s when he developed a more individualistic and personal expression.

Teaching of the Indians reveals Portinari's departure into new forms of expression and his interest in becoming less illustrative and more representational in his presentation. For example, through an incorporation of abstracted human figures and more surrealistic backgrounds, Portinari's murals do not so much depict a recognizable scene, as they appear to symbolize and universalize a non-specific environment. His increased experimentations with abstraction, surrealism and stylistic contrasts, especially in the more architecturally integrated murals of the second vestibule, indicate a change in his artistic development and, perhaps, the beginnings of a transition in the Pan-American art world away from an intentionally populist art towards a more individualistic artistic expression.

As Eva Cockcroft has pointed out, the 1940s signalled a move away from Social Realism with all its extremist political implications, and a new emphasis on abstraction

in art, especially in the United States.[93] Although Portinari's art exists somewhere outside of the polarized art historical realms of politically extreme content and abstract, experimental form, his Hispanic Foundation murals were perhaps indicative of such changes.

Mining of Gold

Of the four murals, Mining of Gold (Fig. 6) was the most experimental work for Portinari in terms of both his move towards abstraction and his attempt to arrive at new compositional formats. As in Discovery of the Land (Fig. 3), Portinari favored a strong sense of movement, even though there are no static figures in this work to counteract the kinetic energy which encircles the seven figures. Divided into separate realms, the figures are interconnected through their gestures and the central boat, which defines the spacial depth in the piece. Furthermore, the connection between the boat's central figure and the two miners in the foreground form a triangular arrangement which, as Fabris has noted, echoes the pyramidal composition of the central group in Teaching of the Indians.[94]

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[93] Cockcroft, 194-201.

[94] Fabris, 56. Fabris also notes the correspondence between the vertical forms of Discovery of the Land and Entry into the Forest.

The economic theme of gold mining was a particularly Brazilian topic and in Portinari's depiction of these workers, provided what was probably the most contemporary expression found in the murals. Instead of a scene celebrating the economic successes of Latin America, Portinari chose one which implied the economic hardships of the New World.

Like the theme of colonial catechism, the topic of gold mining had been explored by the artist before. In his ink sketch for this mural (Fig. 38), Portinari directly re-incorporated the compositional format of Garimpo, the third scene from the left in the 1936-39 Ministry of Education series (Fig. 7). Since this first format was rejected, Portinari created an entirely different arrangement of seven figures for the color gouache study (Fig. 39). In the color study, he established almost the exact format for the finished mural. The combination of figures and use of rhythmic lines suggest unified movement and a sense of interaction throughout the piece. For the finished mural, this scheme allowed Portinari to experiment with the facial features of the figures, discovering further ways in which to enhance the frenzied atmosphere of the gold miners.

Portinari's figures in Mining of Gold continue to affirm the importance of ethnic diversity in the Americas, but here his recognizably non-European figures are not limited by any idealized portrayals of a specific race or

the occupation of gold mining. In Discovery of the Land, the common sailor is represented anonymously as a type of "Pan-American worker." However, in Mining of Gold, schematized facial features of the figures are representative of a greater hybridization of the people of the Americas and an expressed strength of the ethnic diversity within the New World.

This difference in figural representation can be seen in a comparison between a detail of the sailor (Fig. 19) in Discovery of the Land and a detail of a *garimpeiro* (Fig. 40) from Mining of Gold. This difference demonstrates Portinari's use of a new complexity of possible representations for these workers of the Americas. Although Portinari was not at all limited to realistic portrayals in past works, his use of abstraction for expressive effect within a mural scheme was a significant transition within his artistic development. The particular use of geometric abstraction for dramatic effect in Mining of Gold, such as in the figures' triangular noses, would be incorporated in future works as can be seen in a detail from his 1942-43 murals for the Rádio Tupi Building in Rio de Janeiro (Fig. 41) and in a painting from his famous 1944 Série Retirantes (Fig. 42).

Of all the figures in Mining of Gold, the miner in the right foreground, with his checkered shirt and dramatic

facial expression, helps to reinforce and complete the Library of Congress murals. Throughout Entry into the Forest, Teaching of the Indians and Mining of Gold, there is a corresponding visual interplay between the checkered shirts of this miner, the *bandeirante* and one of the native women. Furthermore, the miner's expression of uncertainty echoes the priest's worried expression in Education of the Indians (Fig. 37), and draws attention back to the strangely defiant and cocked stare of the *bandeirante* in Entry into the Forest (Fig. 4). Through this connection, there is a reinforcement, in terms of the murals' heroic and grand scale, of the honesty and inherent strength of these Pan-American workers. Furthermore, there is a combined contemporary expression of a greater solidarity and universality, perhaps in face of the volatile political situations of twentieth century Europe.

Through focusing on such elements as the contributions of workers, the strength of ethnic diversity, a lack of historical specificity, and an absence of traditional, European icons, the artist was able to attain a socialist expression which paralleled the Marxist concerns of the time. Furthermore, in the context of a Pan-American commission, Portinari's depiction of an all inclusive Pan-American proletariat was very likely interpreted as a unified expression of a Pan-American identity, one that was

encouraged during this era of Pan-Americanism and reinforced by the prevalence of anti-Fascism.

Summary and Conclusions

In a 1943 review of Portinari's Library of Congress murals, Edward Honig evaluated the Brazilian artist's contributions in the following way:

> When he finished, he signed an accomplishment in two small rooms, more durable and more instructive with historic insight than any army of diplomats has been able to ratify in a dozen treaties.[95]

Honig's response is revealing of the environment of Pan-Americanism and of a perceived cultural need for Portinari's artistic treaty. In subsequent historical evaluations of Portinari and of these murals, the impact that his art had upon the time in which it was created is an important consideration which has consistently been ignored, if not completely forgotten. Problems involving the categorization of Portinari and of his work frequently have been rooted in a continuing tendency to evaluate Latin American artists apart from the social movements of their time. Throughout this study, an attempt has been made to understand Portinari and his Hispanic Foundation murals within the predominant social, political, and historical movements in which he lived and worked, including a

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[95] Edward Honig, "Portinari's New World Murals," The New Mexico Quarterly Review 8.1 (1943): 5.

consideration of the range of possible meanings that the murals assumed for people of the time.

In this thesis, Candido Portinari's Library of Congress murals have been re-examined through a number of perspectives in an effort to better understand the art historical significance of these works, as well as to promote further understanding of this twentieth-century century artist. As has been demonstrated, the development of the Hispanic Foundation murals was a complicated process which evolved over a period of time and made possible through the participation of certain members of the governments of the United States and Brazil. Throughout this inter-American "goodwill" collaboration between the United States and Brazil, Portinari served as a "cultural ambassador."

Within this context of Pan-Americanism, the Hispanic Foundation murals were stylistically transitional for Portinari's artistic development. The works also shared the common stylistic and ideological concerns of a greater Pan-American mural movement. Furthermore, through their depictions of the colonization of the New World, they reflected a search for a Pan-American identity apart from Europe.

In a discussion of the social and historical context of Pan-Americanism, this study approached this era through considerations of the United States government's political

interests in the nations of Latin America, specifically Brazil. Also, a brief evaluation of the impact of Pan-Americanism on the arts in the United States was presented in order to better comprehend the environment in which the commission for Portinari's murals originated.

In a present-day apathy towards political structures and the possible effects and benefits of art for society, this era of Pan-Americanism, although only some fifty years ago, seems an eternity away. However, the vast category of the history of Pan-Americanism is an area that requires further research. A greater understanding of its historical development is necessary, especially now that there is some historical distance between the tumultuous events of World War II and after, such as the Holocaust, the Cold War, and the Civil Rights movement, to name just a few which have dramatically altered the twentieth century.

A further area of interest within this context of Pan-Americanism would be a greater consideration and investigation of different Latin American historical perspectives and interpretations of Pan-Americanism, particularly in the context of the arts and popular culture.

Pan-Americanism has been predominantly discussed from the perspective of the interests of the United States. However, it is clear, through research presented in this thesis, that Pan-Americanism, as expressed through cultural

arenas, was not solely a one-way objective on the part of the United States. The Brazilian government's initiative in sending Portinari to the United States, as well as the government's enthusiastic publicizing of the event in Brazil, perhaps reflects the cultural, political and economic concerns of a South American nation in search of a modern identity.

Through a presentation of various discourses in which to further evaluate the work of Portinari, this thesis aimed to re-examine the Brazilian artist's Library of Congress murals through different perspectives in order to better understand the historical significance of the murals, as paintings which spoke to the particular era of Pan-Americanism, as well as which reveal elements of certain political currents of the time. Additionally, it was shown that these murals can be interpreted as a socialist expression reflective of the common objectives and the pervasive intellectual atmosphere of Marxism that existed within a larger Pan-American mural movement.

Portinari's Library of Congress murals, as part of this Pan-American mural movement, were created within a predominant political atmosphere of Marxism and, as a Pan-American collaboration between the United States and Brazil united against Fascism, spoke to a perceived need for a culturally unifying art that could re-define a Pan-American identity apart from Europe.

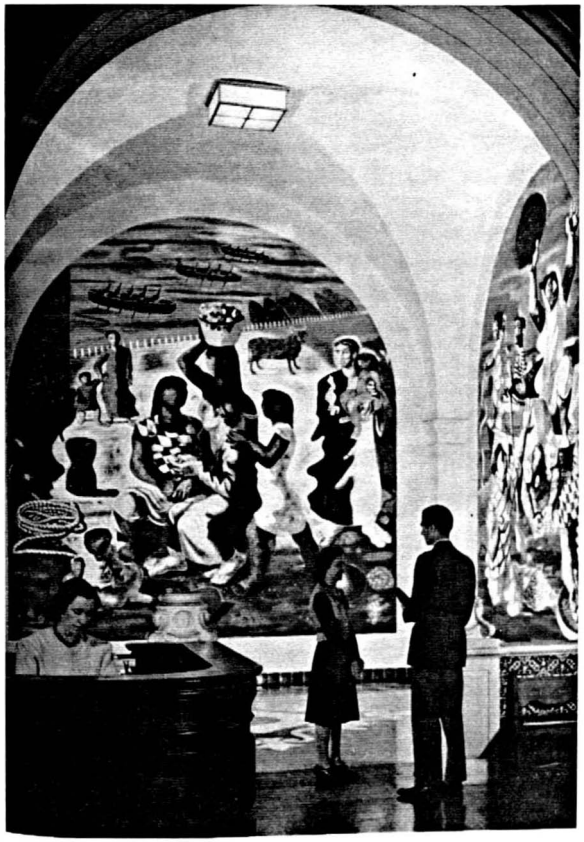

Fig. 1 "Brazilian Murals in the Library of Congress Portray Scenes Common to All the Americas" Nicholas, William H. "Wartime Washington," The National Geographic Magazine 84.3 (September 1943):269

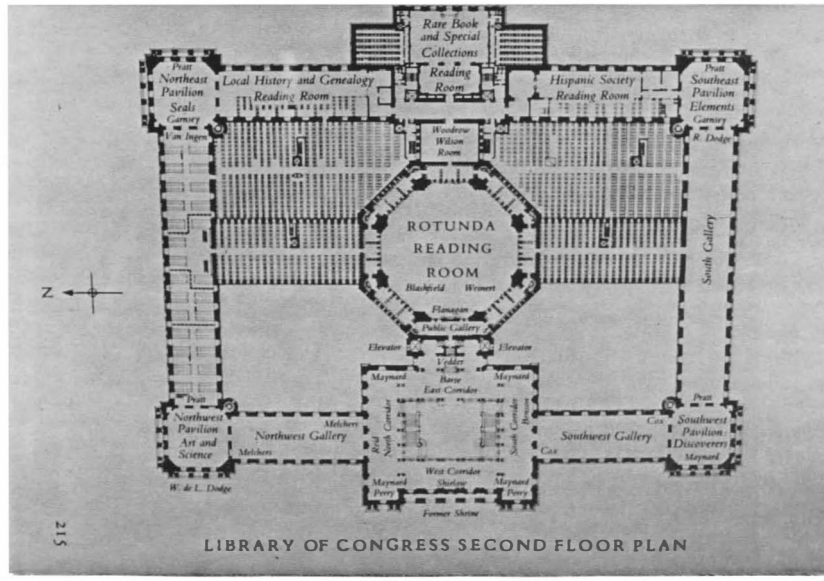

Fig. 2 "Library of Congress Second Floor Plan," see two vestibules that lead into Hispanic Room in Southeast Section

Fig. 3 Discovery of the Land, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Mural, The Hispanic Foundation, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

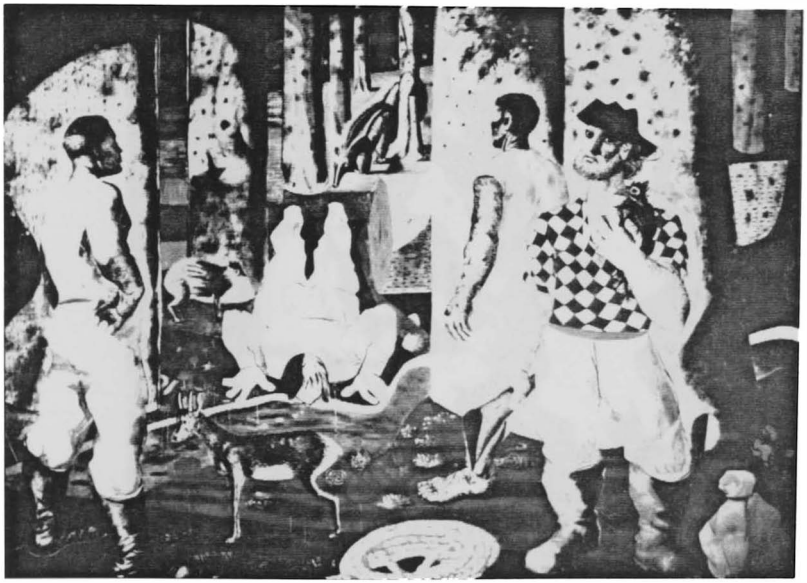

Fig. 4 Entry into the Forest, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Mural, The Hispanic Foundation, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Fig. 5. Teaching of the Indians, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Mural, The Hispanic Foundation, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Fig. 6 Mining of Gold, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Mural, The Hispanic Foundation, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Fig. 7. View of Ciclos Econômicos Brasileiros, by Candido Portinari, 1936-39. Murals, left to right: Cana; Gado; Ouro; Fumo; Algodão.

Fig. 8. Morro, by Candido Portinari, 1933. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

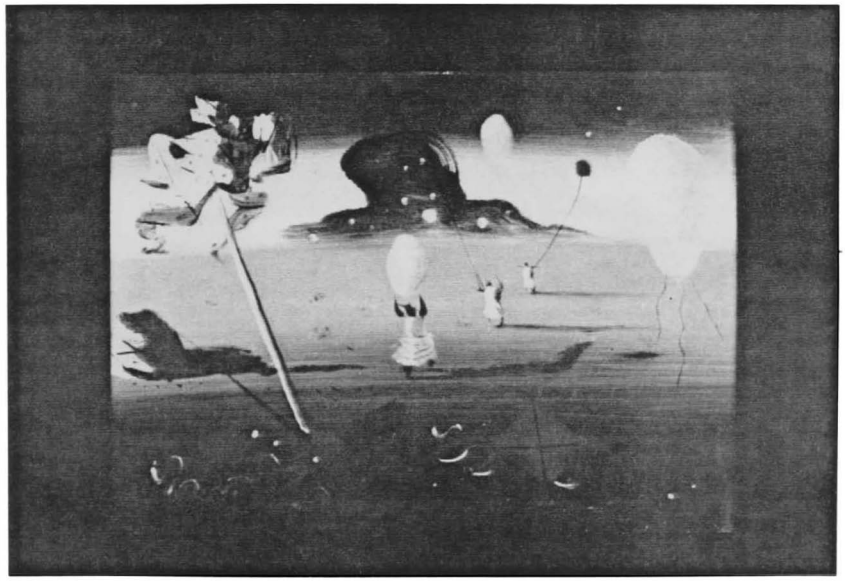

Fig. 9. Espantalho, by Candido Portinari, 1940.

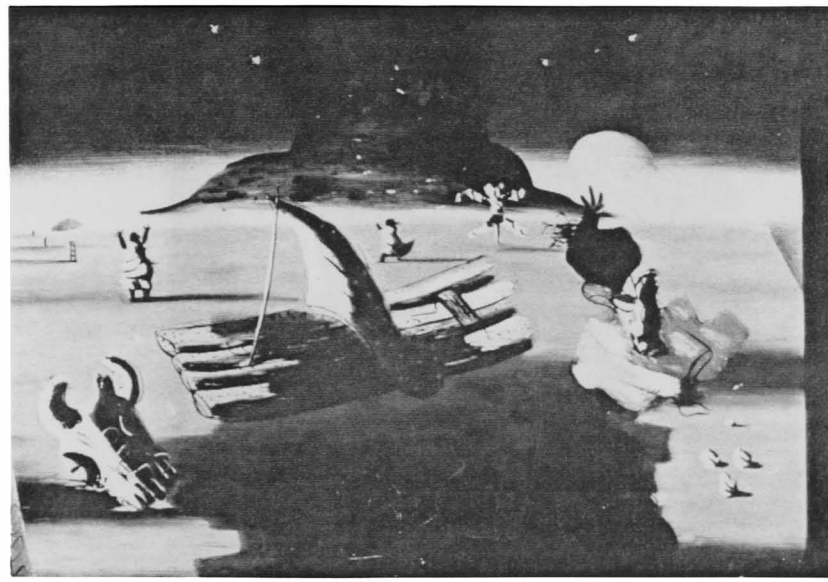

Fig. 10. Cruzão do Sul, by Candido Portinari, 1940.

Fig. 11. Return from the Fair, by Candido Portinari, 1940.

Fig. 12. Portrait of Paulo Rossi Osir, by Candido Portinari, 1935. Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC-USP).

Fig. 13. Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil, by Tarsila do Amaral, 1924. Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC-USP).

Fig. 14. Baile na Roça, by Candido Portinari, 1924. Image Courtesy of Projeto Portinari Archives, Rio de Janeiro.

Fig. 15. Café, by Candido Portinari, 1935. Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro.

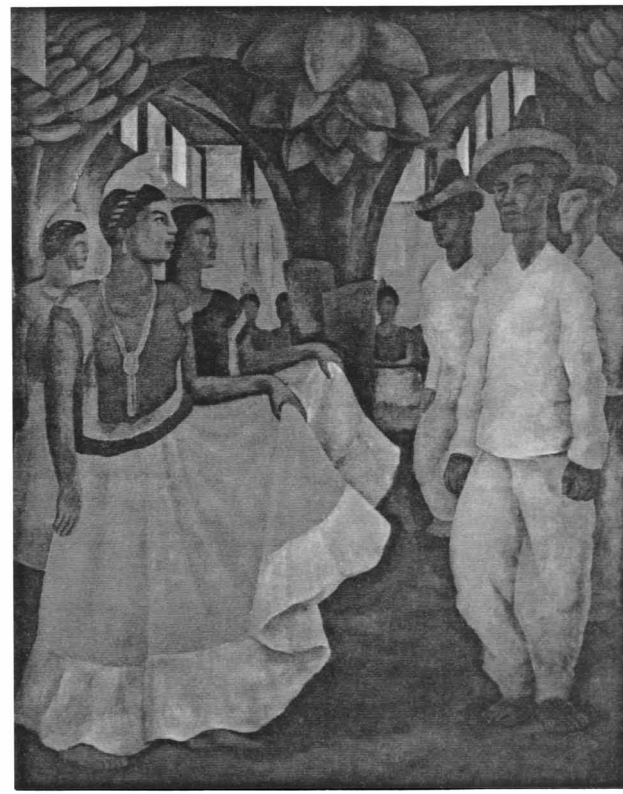

Fig. 16. Dance in Tehuantepec (Version of "La Zandunga" Fresco in the Secretaría de Educación Pública) by Diego Rivera, 1928. Collection IBM Corporation, Armonk, New York.

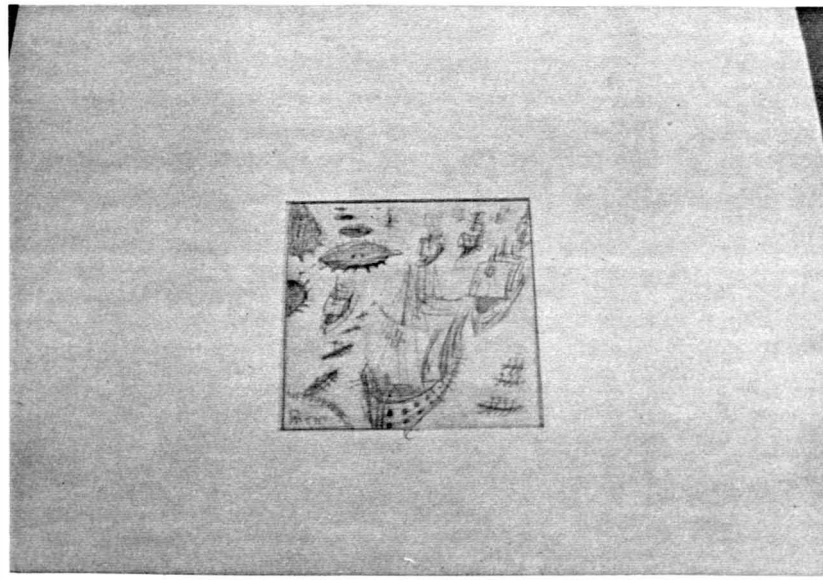

Fig. 17. Sketch for Discovery of the Land, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Pencil on paper, 5 1/4" x 5 1/2." Prints and Photographs Division, The Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Fig. 18. Sketch for Discovery of the Land, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Gouache on paper, 11 1/2" x 11 1/4." Prints and Photographs Division, The Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Fig. 19. Discovery of the Land (black and white detail).

Fig. 20. O Lavrador de Café, by Candido Portinari, 1934.

Fig. 21. Sketch for Fumo, by Candido Portinari, 1936-39 Study for Ciclos Econômicos Brasileiros, Ministry of Education, Rio de Janeiro.

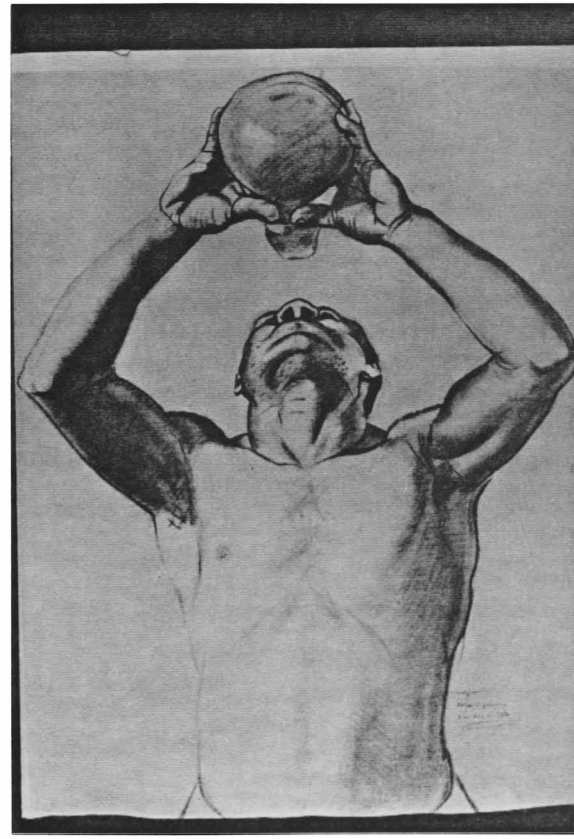

Fig. 22. Sketch for Fumo, by Candido Portinari, 1936-39. Study for Ciclos Econômicos Brasileiros, Ministry of Education, Rio de Janeiro.

O pintor PORTINARI numa caricatura de *ALVARUS*

Fig. 23. "O Pintor PORTINARI numa caricatura de ALVARUS," 1942. Vamos Ler 5 November 1942: 18.

Fig. 24. Arts of the South (black and white detail), by Thomas Hart Benton, 1932. The New Britain Museum of American Art.

Fig. 25. Annunciation, by Fra Angelico, ca. 1438-1452. The Dominican Priory of San Marco, Florence.

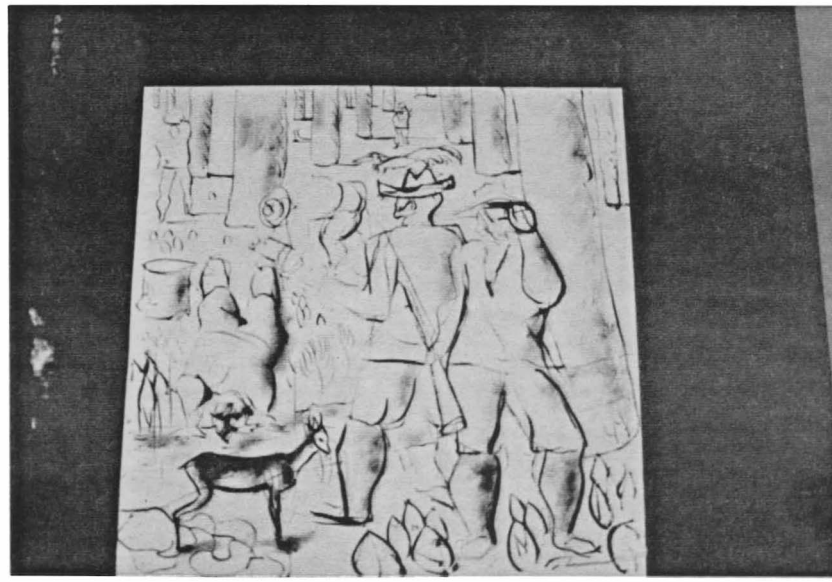

Fig. 26. Sketch for Entry into the Forest, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Ink on paper, 11 1/2" x 11 1/4." Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

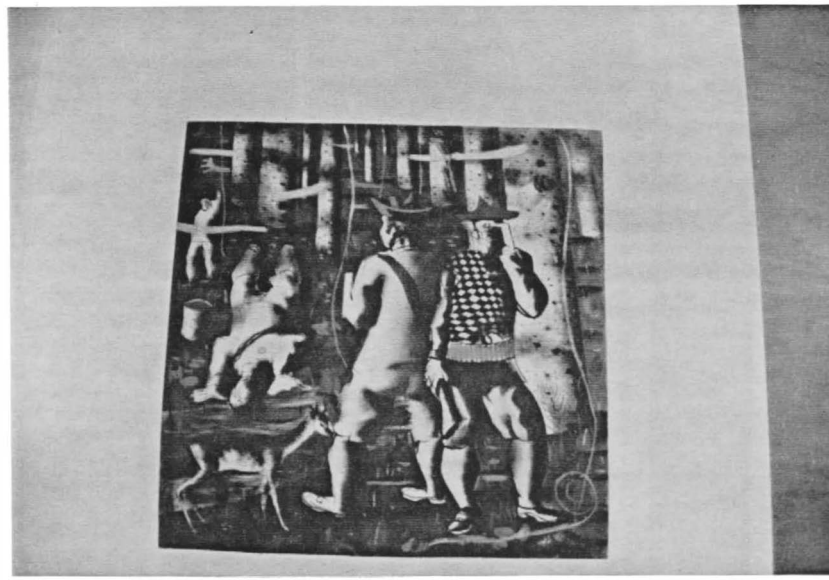

Fig. 27. Sketch for Entry into the Forest, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Gouache on paper, 11 1/2 " x 11 1/4." Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

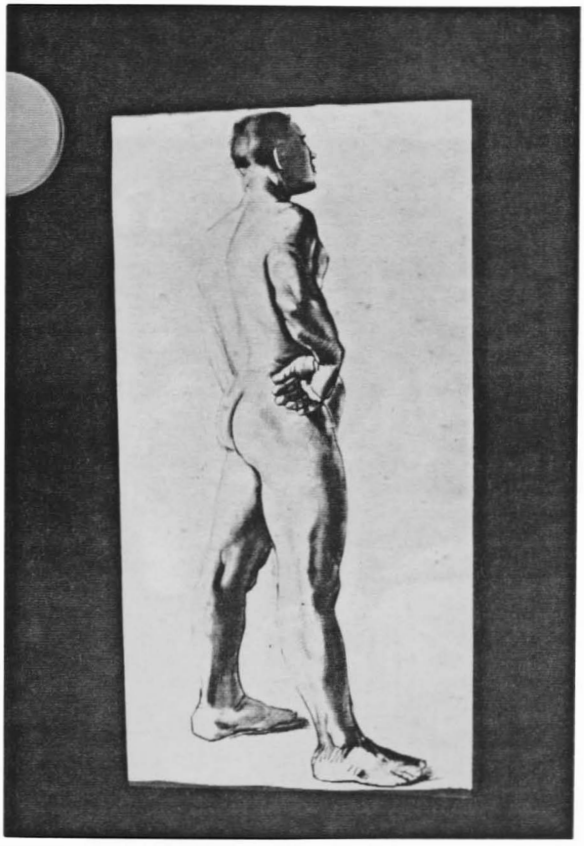

Fig. 28. Figure study, by Candido Portinari, 1936-39. Nude drawing for the Ministry of Education, Rio de Janeiro.

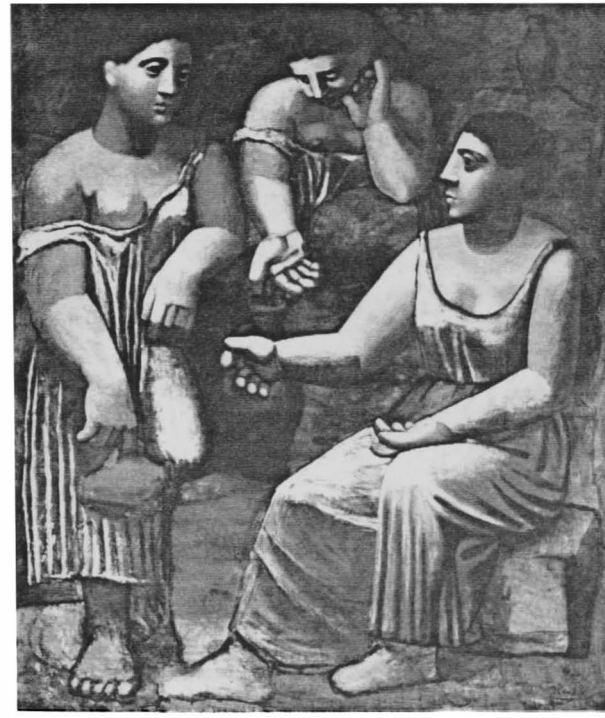

Fig. 29. Three Women at the Fountain, by Pablo Picasso, 1921. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

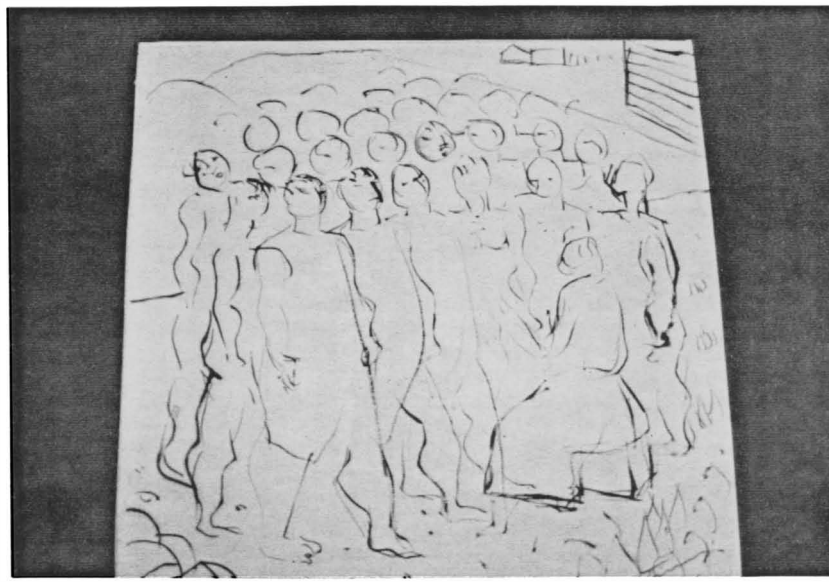

Fig. 30. Sketch for Teaching of the Indians, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Ink on paper, 11 1/2" x 11 1/4." Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

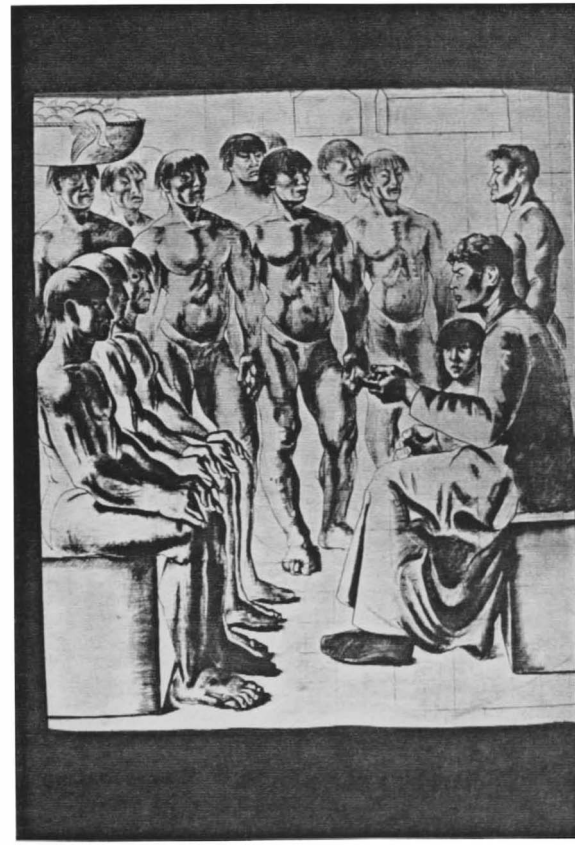

Fig. 31. Charcoal sketch by Candido Portinari, 1936-39. Study for the Ministry of Education, Rio de Janeiro.

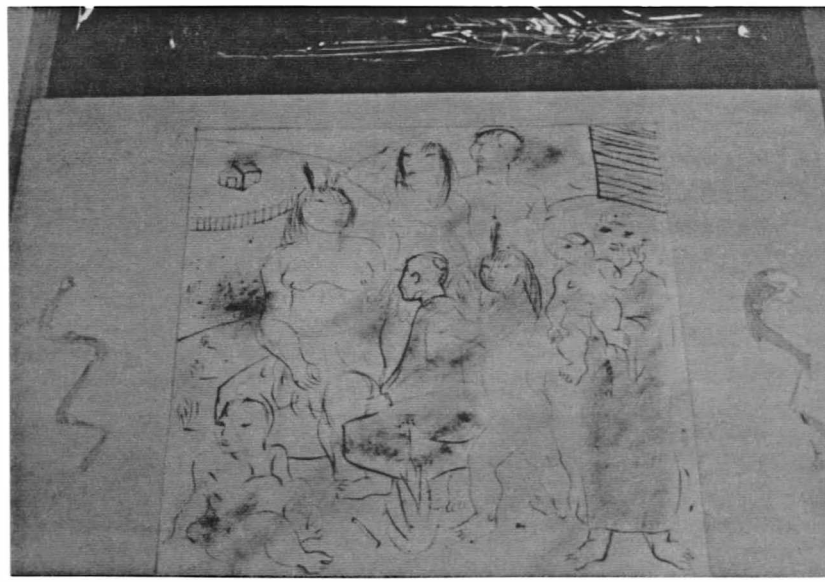

Fig. 32. Sketch for Teaching of the Indians, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Ink on paper, 11 1/2" x 11 1/2." Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

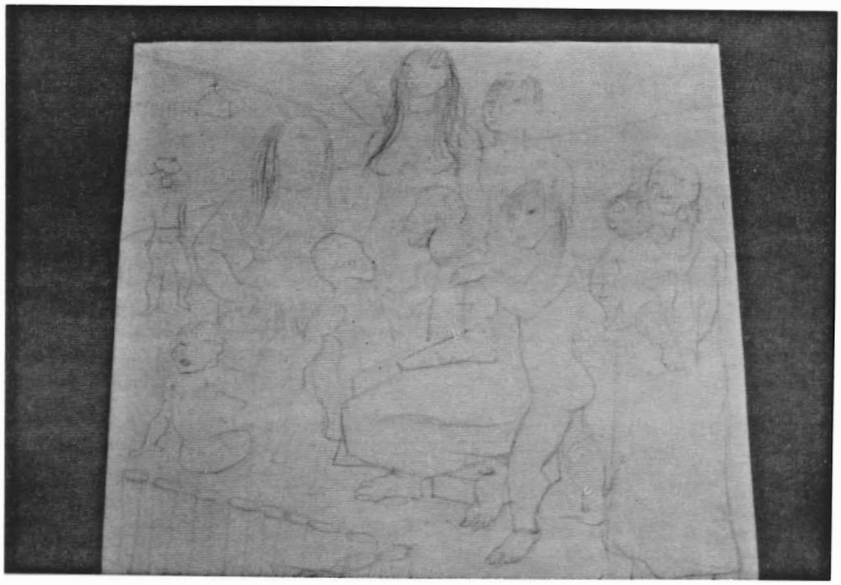

Fig. 33. Sketch for Teaching of the Indians, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Pencil on paper, 11 1/2" x 11 1/4." Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

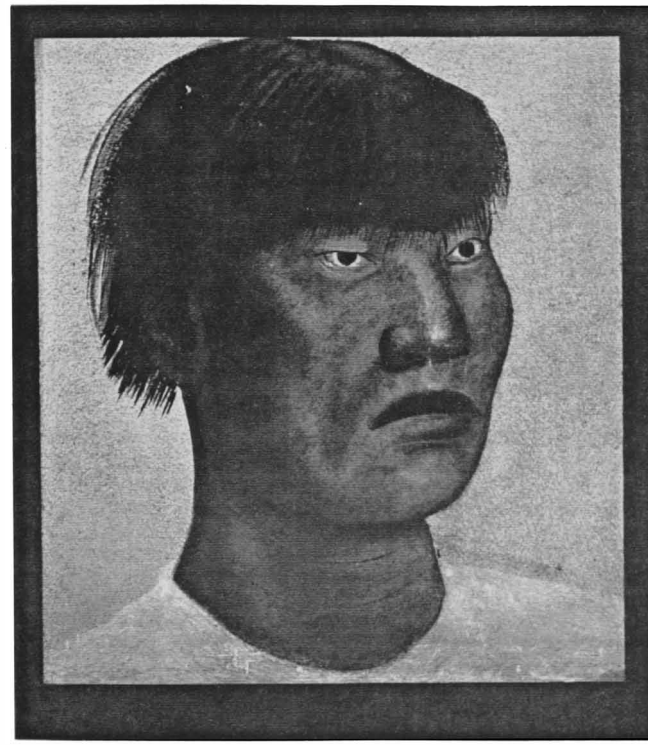

Fig. 34. Head of an Indian, by Candido Portinari, 1938. Study for the Ministry of Education.

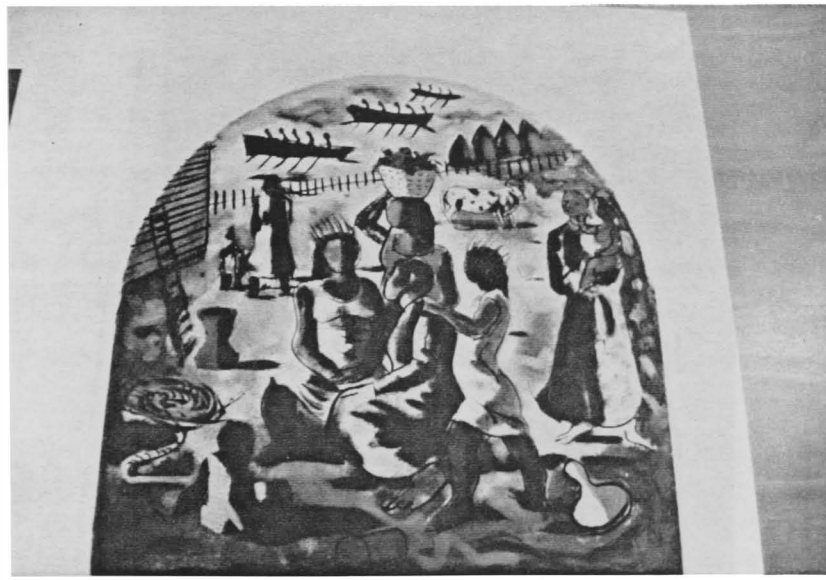

Fig. 35. Sketch for Teaching of the Indians, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Gouache on paper, 15 1/2" x 15 1/2." Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

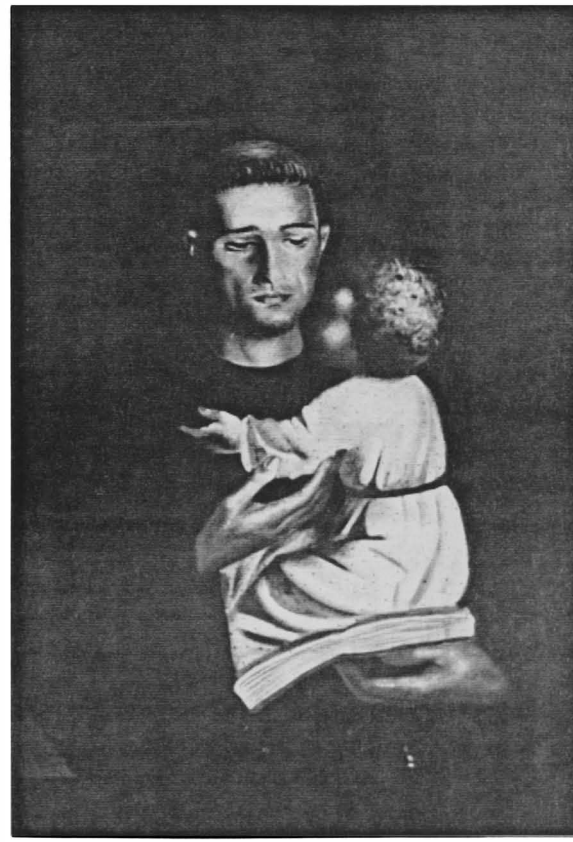

Fig. 36. St. Anthony, by Candido Portinari, 1940-41.

Fig. 37. Teaching of the Indians (detail).

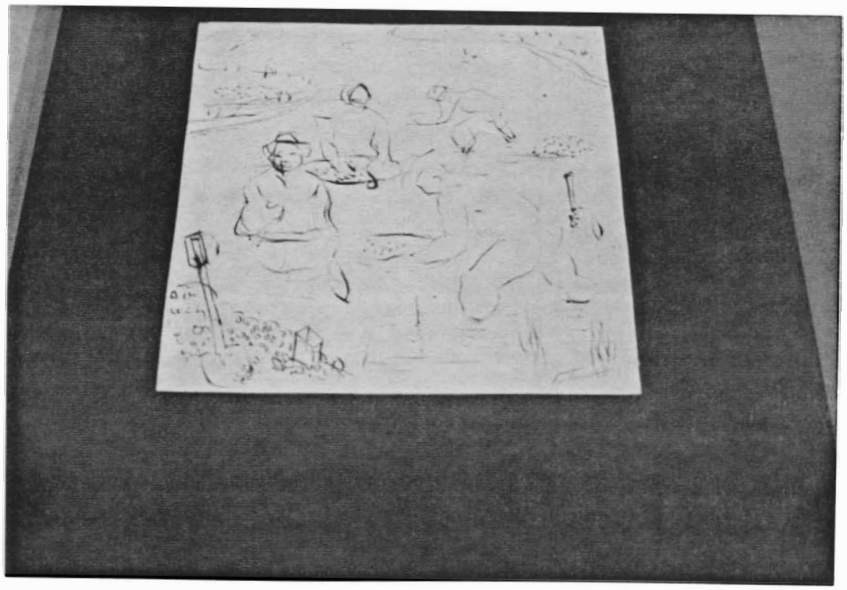

Fig. 38. Sketch for Mining of Gold, by Candido Portinari, 1941. Ink on paper, 11 1/2" x 11 1/2." Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

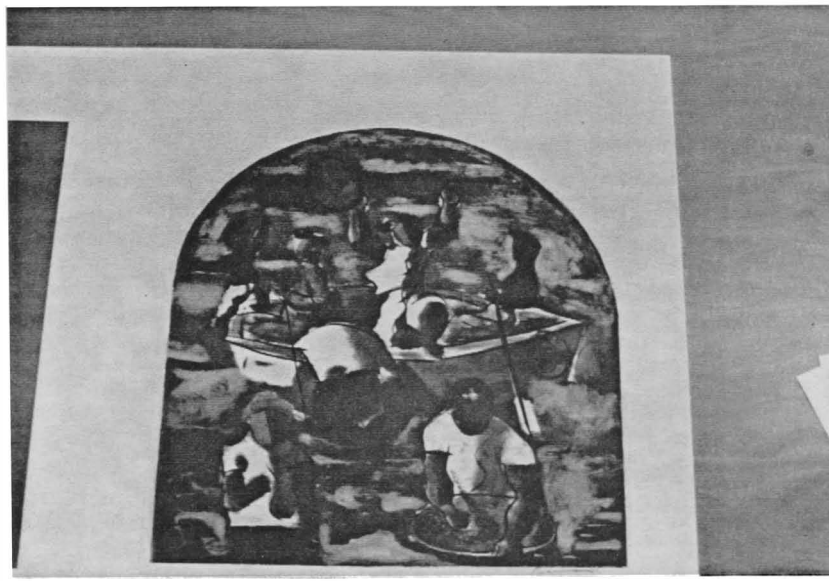

Fig. 39. Sketch for Mining of Gold, by Candido Portinari,1941. Gouache on paper, 15 1/2" x 15 1/2." Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Fig. 40. Mining of Gold (detail).

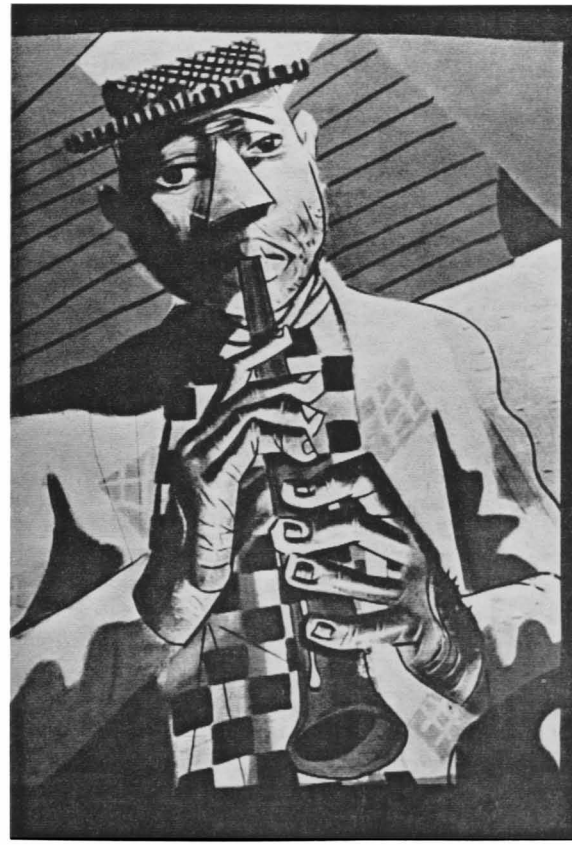

Fig. 41. Detail from Chorinhos, by Candido Portinari, 1942-43. Mural, Rádio Tupi Building, Rio de Janeiro (destroyed by fire).

Fig. 42. Detail of Retirantes, by Candido Portinari, from Serie Retirantes, 1944. Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), São Paulo.

Appendix

Chronology of Candido Torquato Portinari

1903: Born December 29 on a coffee farm/plantation near the small interior town of Brodowski in the state of São Paulo. He is the second of twelve children to Italian immigrant parents, Giovan Baptista Portinari and Dominga Torquato.

1919: Portinari moves to Rio de Janeiro and studies at the Liceu de Artes e Ofícios and with Justino Miguez, a Portuguese who decorated cafes and bars in Rio.

1920: Enrolls as a free student at the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes (ENBA), studying figure drawing under Lucílio de Albuquerque.

1922: In February, the revolutionary Week of Modern Art (Semana de Arte Moderna) takes place in São Paulo, marking the centenary of the independence of Brazil. Portinari, working in a different, very neo-classical academic environment, exhibits for the first time in November in the ENBA's annual Salon (Salão Nacional de Belas-Artes) and receives an honorable mention for a portrait.

1923: Awarded a bronze medal in the annual Salon for a portrait of Paulo Mazuchelli. His name begins to be cited in the press.

1924: In August, submits *Baile na Roça*, to the annual Salon, his first painting with a Brazilian theme. The painting is rejected.

1925: Participates in the Spring Salon with two portraits and gives his first interview. In August, is awarded a small silver medal in the annual Salon, qualifying him to compete for the European travel prize.

1927: Presents two portraits in the annual Salon, competing for the Travel prize and instead wins the large silver medal prize.

1928: In the 35th annual Salon, 12 of his works are exhibited, and he wins the Travel prize for a portrait of the poet Olegário Mariano.

1929/30: Leaves for Europe in June, temporarily settles in Paris and decides not to attend the Académie Julien, which was the custom of previous winners. During this period travels to London, Madrid, Toledo, Seville and Lourdes. Portinari mostly visits museums, occasionally attends studio classes, but paints next to nothing. His inactivity concerns his friends and colleagues in Brazil, who expect him to return with a unique work to be acquired by the national museum. He meets his future wife, Maria Victoria Martinelli, an Uruguayan woman who is in Paris with her family. They spend Christmas in Italy, visiting Florence and Pisa. During this period, Portinari writes letters expressing his overwhelming desire and intention to paint his native land upon his return to Brazil.

1931: In January, returns with wife Maria and settles in Rio, intensely resuming his painting. Upon return, finds a new artistic environment in Rio, due to the changes that the Revolution of 1930 had brought about through President Getúlio Vargas. The ENBA, under new leadership has a "Revolutionary Salon", on whose planning commission Portinari served and for which there was no jury or awards, resulting in an open exhibition of diverse works. He also exhibits in this Salon. The Association of Brazilian Artists sponsors an individual exposition of Portinari's work, at the Palace Hotel, which continues annually until 1936.

1932: Shows in exposition at the Palace Hotel, with more than 60 works dealing with Brazilian themes.

1933: In July, exhibits at the Palace Hotel. In November, sends 6 works to São Paulo for the Second Exposition of Modern Art of SPAM, Sociedade Pro-Arte Moderna.

1934: In July, exhibits more that 30 works at the Palace Hotel which emphasize stronger social themes. Has his first individual exhibition in the city of São Paulo. His painting, *Mestiço*, is acquired by the Pinacoteca of the State of São Paulo, the first institution to include Portinari in its collection.

1935: In June has another individual exhibition at the Palace Hotel. In July is contracted to teach a course in mural and easel painting at the University of the Federal District. (UDF) His work *Café* wins the Second Honorable Mention at the Third International Carnegie Exhibition in Pittsburgh in October.

1936: In January, at the Palace Hotel, is the first exhibition of works by Portinari's students from the UDF. His work, *Café* tours in the United States. Portinari paints four large murals for the Monumento Rodoviário, on the highway between Rio and São Paulo. Gustavo Capanema, the Minister of Education, invites Portinari to paint a series of murals for the Ministry of Education. In July, the last individual exhibition at the Palace Hotel, organized by the Association of Brazilian artists takes place.

1937: Portinari decides to execute in fresco the murals for the Ministry of Education and begins the first set of those this year. Sends 25 works to the May Salon in São Paulo. On the 10th of November, there is a coup d'etat and the Estado Novo is established by Vargas. At the end of the year, American artist Rockwell Kent visits Brazil and befriends Portinari, who paints his portrait.

1939: Vargas closes the UDF and Portinari's job as professor is gone. In January, his son João Candido is born. Friendship forms with Florence Horn, American journalist for Fortune magazine. Paints three murals for the Brazilian Pavilion for the World's Fair in New York. Three of Portinari's paintings, are sent to New York to be photographed for Fortune magazine and are seen by Alfred Barr who becomes interested in including them in a show. One of the works, *Morro,* is acquired by the Museum of Modern Art. In November, there is a large exhibition of 269 works at the Museu Nacional de Belas-Artes, sponsored by the Ministry of Education.

1940: In March, nine of Portinari's works are shown in a Washington D. C. exhibition featuring the art of Helena Rubinstein's collection. Has a solo exhibition at the Pan American Union in Washington, D. C. His works are featured in a July exhibition of modern Latin American art at New York's Riverside Museum, which was an itinerant exhibition. In August, there is an individual exhibition at the Detroit Institute of Art. Has a solo exhibition, "Portinari of Brazil" in October at the Museum of Modern Art, for which Portinari travels to the United States for the first time. In the United States, the University of Chicago Press publishes Rockwell Kent's Portinari: His Life and Art. Illustrates A Mulher Ausente by Adalgisa Nery.

1941: In April, his work is featured in an exhibition at Howard University Gallery of Art. Travels to the United States to execute murals for the Hispanic Foundation of the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C. In December, U. S. enters the second world war, and Portinari decides to stay in the U. S. for a while, encountering later difficulties in being able to leave.

1942: Library of Congress murals are inaugurated in January. Travels to New York to paint a portrait of Nelson Rockefeller's mother. While in New York, he sees Picasso's *Guernica*, which has a tremendous impact on his work. Back in Brazil, starts a series of murals for the Rádio Tupi building in Rio de Janeiro. Illustrates a childrens' book, Maria Rosa, by Vera Kelsey.

1943: Continues the murals for Rádio Tupi. Executes new murals for the Ministry of Education and designs the tiles, or "azulejos" for the building. Illustrates Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas by Machado de Assis. His murals for Rádio Tupi, *Série Bíblica*, are inaugurated.

1944: Paints the famous *Série Retirantes*. Begins to paint the mural *São Francisco* for the chapel in Pampulha, Belo Horizonte. In October, Portinari finishes another mural, *Jogo Infantis*, for the Ministry of Education.

1945: Paints *Via Crucis* for the chapel in Pampulha, Belo Horizonte. Portinari joins the Communist Party of Brazil and becomes a candidate for the position of federal deputy for the state of São Paulo and does not get elected.

1946: Executes a series of drawings entitled, *Série Meninos de Brodósqui*. Receives an invitation from Germain Bazin to exhibit in Paris. In April, the Institute of Architects of Brazil promotes an exhibition to benefit Spanish anti-fascist guerilla fighters, to which Portinari contributes two works. In October, the Charpentier Gallery in Paris holds an exhibition of Portinari's art, with 84 works represented. One of the *Série Retirantes*, *Criança Morta*, is acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in Paris.

1947: Runs for office again as a candidate for senator but loses by a small margin. In May, Brazil's Superior Electoral Tribunal cancels the registration of the Communist Party. "Portinari of Brazil" exhibition is shown at the Pan-American Union, which would be the last exhibition in the United States to feature Portinari's work for twelve years, due to the artist's political stance. In May, goes to Argentina, where in Buenos Aires, at the Salón Peuser, there is an exhibition of his work. In August, he goes to Montevideo, where there is another exhibition of his work at the "Salón de Nacional de Belas Artes."

1948: In Montevideo, paints *A Primeira Missa no Brasil*. Has an exhibition at the the Museum of Art in São Paulo. Illustrates O Alienista by Machado de Assis and Zé Brasil by Monteiro Lobato. Begins studies for the large panel *Tiradentes*, commissioned for the Cataguases College in Minas Gerais and designed by Oscar Niemeyer.

1949: The *Tiradentes* panel is executed and inaugurated in November. Travels to France with his family.

1950: Portinari is commissioned for a panel of "azulejos" for the Conjunto Residencial do Pedregulho, in Rio. Travels to Italy and visits Chiampo, the hometown of his father. Travels to France again, paints *Os Pescadores*. Returns to Italy, where he represents Brazil in the 25th Venice Bienale.

1951: Works are exhibited in a special room for the first São Paulo Bienal. Participates in the 56th Annual National Salon in Rio. He had not exhibited with the ENBA since 1932. A monograph on Portinari, is organized and introduced by his friend Eugenio Luraghi and is published in Milan.

1952: Portinari executes the panel *Chegada de D. João VI ao Brasil*, commissioned by the Banco de Bahia. In his hometown of Brodowski, he paints a series of works for the Matriz Cathedral in the nearby town of Batatais. In October, is asked to begin work on the War and Peace Murals for the United Nations in New York, intended as a gift by the Brazilian government.

1953: The decorations at Batatais are inaugurated with great fanfare and many people of the region attending. Suffers from an intestinal hemorrhage, his first serious health problem involving lead poisoning, due to years of painting. In August finishes his second *Via Sacra*, to accompany the other decorations at Batatais Cathedral. At end of April, has an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio.

1954: Has an exhibition in February at the Museum of Art in São Paulo. Is represented at the Venice Bienale.

1955: In February, the contract is set for the United Nations panels. Participates in the 3rd Bienal of São Paulo, where his studies for the War and Peace murals are shown. One work of Portinari's, *Espantalho*, is featured in the June show "Art in the 20th Century" at the San Francisco Museum of Art.*O Descobrimento do Brasil* is inaugurated in October at the Banco Português do Brasil in Rio. Portinari wins a Gold Medal from the International Arts Council of New York as the best painter of the year. Illustrates *A Selva*, by Ferreita de Castro.

1956: President Kubitschek inaugurates an exhibition for the War and Peace panels, before the works were sent to the United Nations. Travels to Italy and then Israel, exhibiting in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Ein Harod. Executes numerous studies, such as the *Série Israel* and *Série Dom Quixote*. Awarded the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation Prize.

1957/60: Receives the Hallmark Art Award in 1957. Participates in various national (Brazil) and international exhibitions. He is represented at the first Inter-American Art Biennial in 1958, held in Mexico City. That same year, his works are in a Brussels exhibition, "50 Years of Modern Art."

1959: Participates in the 5th Bienal do São Paulo. Illustrates Menino de Engenho by José Lins do Rego. Solo exhibition at the Wildenstein Gallery in New York City.

1960: Illustrates the French edition of Graham Greene's The Power and the Glory. Executes panels for the Banco de Boston in São Paulo. He and his wife Maria separate after 30 years of marriage. In June, there is an exhibition of his work in Brno, Czechoslovakia, which then travels to Prague and Bratislava.

1961: Illustrates Terre Promise and Les Roses de Septembre by André Maurois. In Rio, Portinari has the last individual exhibition during his lifetime, which takes place at the Galeria Bonino. Travels to Europe.

1962: The artist dies of lead poisoning on the 6th of February.

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