Hobos to Street People:

Artists’ Responses to Homelessness from the New Deal to the Present

Curated by Art Hazelwood

In the Great Depression of the 1930s many artists began to address issues of human rights. The large number of poor, displaced, and homeless people was one important focus. Artists were not only observers, but they actively found ways to influence society through exhibition and distribution of their work. In the late 1970s, with the rise of the modern era of mass homelessness, many artists again began to focus on what was happening to poor people in our society. Structural changes in the American economy and a return to fiscally conservative ideology began a period of increased poverty and economic inequality. By 2008, an estimated 3.5 million Americans lived without housing and homeless children in school exceeded 900,000, according to the US Department of Education.

The Hobos to Street People exhibition presents the work of artists who have sought to bring attention to the tragedy of homelessness. Some of the artists in this exhibition personally experienced homelessness and poverty, some worked directly with organizations to combat poverty. They felt that their art could be used to focus attention on issues of homelessness. They believed their art would engage society in the struggle for a better world, and that everyone should take an interest in the well-being of less fortunate people.

Panel Discussion

The History of Public Funding and the Arts
Thursday, July 2, 2009, 6:00-8:00pm
Speakers: Lincoln Cushing, Tim Drescher, Mark Johnson. Moderator: Gray Brechin, Project Scholar, California’s Living New Deal Project

Labor Fest Event Exhibition walk through and Mural Tour
July 18, 2009, 2:00 p.m.
An exhibition walk through with curator Art Hazelwood, independent scholar Tim Drescher and artist Jos Sances.

Artists’ Panel
Hobos to Street People Artists Discuss Their Work
Thursday, August 6, 2009, 6:00-8:00pm
Speakers: Christine Hanlon, Joe Sances, Jesus Barraza, Doug Minkler. Moderator: Art Hazelwood, Curator

August 30- October 25, 2009, the exhibit will be at:
Kolligan Library, University of California, Merced
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Inside cover: (Front) Oscar Grant Mural (detail) by Desi © Thomas Hawk (Back) Memorial art by Joy Gloria Liu. Photo © Diana Pei Wu
Above: Clean and Safe Ports demonstration. © 2008 Brooke Anderson
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