

As America transitioned from the Great Depression into a war economy and eventual recovery, the country was propelled into a burgeoning artistic center. As a consequence of warfare, Europe's reign as an art and design powerhouse was diminished as its human capital, energy, and resources were depleted. The political atmosphere led, if not pushed, European artists to seek refuge in America before, during, and after the war, which was a catalyst to spread modernist principles to the U.S.

Émigrés included German painter Hans Hofmann, Hungarian painter and photographer László Moholy-Nagy, German architect Walter Gropius; German artist and educator Josef Albers, German textile artist Annie Albers, and Finnish architect Gottlieb Eliel Saarinen. These aforementioned modernists, highly respected in their own fields, were recruited to spearhead and teach at American educational institutions such as: Mills College in Oakland, California; Black Mountain College in Asheville, North Carolina; Cranbrook Academy in Bloomfield, Michigan; and the Institute of Design in Chicago, Illinois. While European modernism had made its way to America earlier in the century, these masters influenced art programs through teaching, and further spread modernism's principles throughout the U.S.

Many of these artists were once connected to the Staatliches Bauhaus in Germany, a school founded by Walter Gropius, and served as conduit between art and industry. The Bauhaus' believed in the unity of craft and the arts. They educated students on standards of craftsmanship as well as modernist principles and applied these ideas to industrial design.²¹ This provided an important connection between craft and modernism. This influence expanded to the U.S. as Moholy-Nagy and others mimicked much of the

Bauhaus curriculum and introduced new modernist theories of art, craft, and design.²² During the early 1940s, Margaret De Patta was one of the metalsmiths who benefitted from her close connection with modernists Moholy-Nagy, György Kepes, Milton Halberstadt, and Eugene Bielawski after she took courses at Mills College and the School of Design in Chicago. This allowed De Patta to think beyond what had been jewelry's traditional limitations. As the tenets of reforming art and design movements established themselves in American art programs, several MAG members began teaching the next generation of students. Peter Macchiarini and Margaret De Patta began teaching metalsmithing and design at the California Labor School. In 1942, pioneering metalsmith Bob Winston taught jewelry at the California College of Arts and Crafts (now known as the California College of Arts).²³ Among his students were future MAG members Florence Resnikoff, Irena Brynner, and Robert Dhaemers — all of whom went on to teach jewelry themselves.²⁴

While American artists and industrial designers were heavily influenced by the aesthetics of art and design that came from Europe, American design reflected a form of homegrown modernism born out of regional and national influences of the time. European modernism evolved into American modernism — a style rather than an idea. Following World-War I in America, artists, architects, and industrial designers considered the impact of the machine and technological advancements through the streamlining of design. The machine aesthetic played heavily in American design, as the leitmotif of European modernism flourished. This reflected America's fascination with speed and the modernization of society. Industrial designers applied the streamlined design to

airplanes, cars, furniture, and metalware. From painting to architecture, industrial design to the decorative arts, modern style began to penetrate the American marketplace.

Spurred on by an emerging middle class and returning veterans, post World-War II America saw a boom in demand and mass consumerism for products to meet the needs of contemporary households. America's newfound optimism permeated American design with bright colors, organic shapes, new materials, and products.²⁵ Materials such as plastics, fiberglass, and polyesters (pioneered by Americans) were taken up by industrial designers and manufacturers. Mass production of goods met the rising middle class demand for modern design at affordable price points. However, the idea of machine-made, mass produced goods was contrary to the studio jewelers' working philosophy; nevertheless, the interest of modern design supported the development of a new jewelry aesthetic.

Craft Revitalization and the Studio Craft Movement

Scholars agree that the America studio craft movement began in earnest during the mid-1940s. Spurred by government intervention and support of the middle class, craft revitalization in the United States was born out of a convergence of events that took place in the years immediately following World War II. Over 5,000 artists once employed under the umbrella of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) enacted by New Deal legislation now found those projects terminated as the government shifted focus to its post-war recovery. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's signing of the Servicemen's

Readjustment Act of 1944 (commonly known as the G.I. Bill), provided thousands of veterans with college tuition and an opportunity to obtain a higher education. Historians point to the G.I. Bill as one of the most significant policies in American history – immediately transforming the socio-economic and educational landscape.²⁶ Economists John Bound and Sarah Turner conclude, “[t]he G.I. Bill was seen by many to have ‘democratized’ the collegiate population by making college a viable option for men from a range of socio-demographic backgrounds, including minorities, first generation Americans, and those from low income households.”²⁷ Unlike any other prior point in U.S. history, government legislation indirectly augmented programs offered at educational institutions by giving money to individuals rather than schools.²⁸

A result of this increased access to higher education was the growth of art programs that created three distinct orientations for teaching students. Students were able to attend creative, vocational, and therapeutic programs based on their needs and desires. Now free from the commitments of service, returning veterans sought refuge in craft as a means to reconnect with humanity, and found they could apply their trade skills as engineers and mechanics to craft. Service members could decide if they were to attend collegiate institutions or non-collegiate programs.²⁹ Art programs received a boost in both attendance and revenues generated by students on the G.I. Bill. This allowed schools to expand programs and open departments in the various genres of craft.

In the San Francisco area, G.I.’s could chose to attend degree granting institutions and non-traditional programs such as: the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, California; Mills College in Oakland, California; University of California at

Berkeley, the California School of Labor (various locations). MAG members, including Margaret De Patta, Peter Macchiarini, Bob Winston, Merry Renk, Byron Wilson, and Florence Resnikoff, headed these art departments and taught courses in design and metalsmithing. These artists and institutions exposed G.I.'s to modernist movements and ideas that coalesced in both the fine and applied arts. With the influx of students attending these programs, a renaissance using clay, glass, fiber, wood, and metal ensued. Craft afforded the students an opportunity to develop a means to make a living. Many of these programs that received additional funding through the G.I. Bill, also had the support of countless individuals and craft organizations.

One organization of particular importance was The Handcraft Cooperative League of America (later known as American Craftsmen Council, 1955, and American Craft Council, 1979). It was established in August 1940 in New York by philanthropist and craft advocate, Aileen Osborn Webb.³⁰ Through Webb, a number of regional craft organizations came together to establish a national dialogue promoting handmade crafts in the public sphere. The organization accomplished this by: opening an “urban crafts store” called America House in New York City in October 1940; starting a publication called *Craft Horizons* (later known as *American Craft*) in 1941; founding the School of the American Craftsmen at Dartmouth College in December 1944; and establishing the Museum of Contemporary Craft (now known as the Museum of Arts and Design) in 1956.³¹

The School of the American Craftsmen was created by the League's education branch – the American Craftsman Education Council. The Council's mission was, in

part, to train returning veterans. The school's philosophy was to develop students critical thinking and to "create purpose, acquaintance with material and process as a basis for the expression of design, respect for skill and technical excellence, self-criticism and the belief by the student craftsman that the crafts are indeed art forms where creative imagination brings into coherent order material, process, and function."³²

Another pivotal educational institution was the New Bauhaus (also known as the School of Design as well as the Institute of Design). The school was critical to the spread of modernism in American craft and design. Moholy-Nagy, formerly of the Bauhaus in Germany, founded the school with the intentions of teaching many of the tenets of its European predecessor. In fact, MAG founders Margaret De Patta and Merry Renk took classes with Moholy-Nagy at the school in Chicago.

Such initiatives moved craft beyond a mere vocation, and helped bring the American studio craft movement into prominence as other institutions emulated such philosophies. Traditional craft was rooted in social reform, historical reference, utilitarianism, and was limited to a cottage industry. However, starting as early as the 1930s, American craftspeople began incorporating modernist principals of design, embracing science and technology, developing an individual philosophical approach to their work, and seeing their objects as art. This transformation of craft became known as the American studio craft movement. Craftspeople found themselves reacting to the modernization and industrialization of society. There was a division amongst craftspeople as to which cannons of modernism to embrace. Like their European peers, American craftspeople sought social reforms; however, artists were divided as to the

acceptance or rejection of industry. While some craftspeople rejected late modernism's embracing of industry, others applied modernist principles of design to their work. MAG artists like Peter Macchiarini often lectured about the affect of mass production on the craftspeople. However, Margaret De Patta, who also applied modernist theory to her work, felt that good design applied to both industrial designer and the craftspeople.

The influence of modernism on industrial designers, architects, and artists, brought about a new modern style. American households now found design not only fashionable, but also affordable and functional. Consumer demand for modern design forced studio craftspeople to incorporate modern style into their work. Combined with the influx of European artists, a prevailing modernist presence, the expansion of art programs, an invigorated student body, and consumer demand, momentum was building for the rejuvenation of craft in America.

Studio Jewelry's Maturation and Regional Distinctions

The American studio jewelry movement emerged in the 1940s and reached its peak in the 1950s. Many of those who benefited from the increased access to metalsmithing programs capitalized on their experience, and sought new ventures to earn a living as independent artists, small manufacturers, or designers. This entrepreneurial spirit was a common thread between all studio jewelers, and provided the impetus for artists to regionally organize and form associations such as the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco and the Artists Craftsmen League of New York.

In the years following World War II, artists found themselves caught in an era of consumerism driven by widespread advertising campaigns, mass production, and industrial innovation.³³ The artists' mission to sell handcrafted, one-of-a-kind, or limited series goods was somewhat counter to the consumer culture of the time; however, jewelers felt they could attract buyers by enticing them with quality work at affordable prices. Artist-jewelers became savvy marketers and began to use new media to advertise their work. While promoting jewelry at art festivals and fairs, they also sought to reach consumers through radio, television, and advertisements. MAG members such as Merry Renk, Irena Brynner, and De Patta went on television and radio to promote their work.³⁴ (fig. 5) Brynner and Art Smith had pictorial coverage in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Modern jewelry exhibitions such as *Modern Jewelry Design* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1946 and the traveling exhibition *Modern Jewelry Under Fifty Dollars* organized by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota helped broaden the public awareness of the field which "appealed to liberal, educated middle-class consumers."³⁵ New York retailers, such as Black, Starr and Gorham, Bloomingdale's, and Georg Jenson, and California retailers and galleries, such as Gump's, Nanny's, Casper's, and Fraser's, responded by stocking these artists' wares – bringing modernist jewelry into the mainstream. While the studio jewelry movement spread throughout the United States, major clusters of artists intentionally established their shops and studios in New York City and San Francisco.

New York City became one of the most important places for jewelers to establish themselves. As a cultural center, the city boasted a cadre of acclaimed museums,

galleries, and institutions. A magnet for the avant-garde, artsy Greenwich Village was home to many artists, writers, and musicians. The neighborhood catered to the eccentric and welcomed bohemians of the Beat Generation. Artist-jewelers such as Frank Rebajes, Paul Lobel, Art Smith, and Sam Kramer maintained their ateliers and apartments there as well.³⁶ Although some artists like Irena Brynner (MAG founder) and Ed Weiner preferred their studios and shops near major museums in midtown, studio jewelers thrived in New York City's open atmosphere, which permitted an organic exchange of dialogue about art, politics, and social issues of the times.³⁷ This exchange not only gave way to similar characteristics in design, but also bestowed a conscious homage to prominent modernists – as fine art movements like American abstract expressionism, surrealism, fauvism, cubism influenced the New York art scene. Many of the New York studio jewelers often referenced Alexander Calder, Joan Miro, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, and Marcel Duchamp in their work. This is due in part to the fact that many of these studio jewelers lived in and around New York City, actively participated in the local gallery scene as well as in major Modern art and Industrial Design exhibitions that circulated among the city's museums.

There were a number of exhibitions shown in New York that helped spread awareness in contemporary design. Some exhibitions included: *Silver: An Exhibition of Contemporary American Design by Manufacturers, Designers, and Craftsmen* (1937), Metropolitan Museum of Art; *Contemporary Industrial Handwrought Silver* (1937), Brooklyn Museum of Art; *Contemporary Industrial Art* (1934, 1940), Metropolitan Museum of Art; *Building the World of Tomorrow* at the New York World's Fair (1939 -

1940); *Modern Handmade Jewelry* (1946), Museum of Modern Art; *Form in Handwrought Silver* (1949), Metropolitan Museum of Art; *Designer Craftsman USA* (1953), Brooklyn Museum of Art, and *Craftsmanship in a Changing World* (1956), Museum of Contemporary Craft.

Among these exhibitions, and the most crucial to the acceptance of modernist studio jewelry as an art form, was the traveling exhibition *Modern Handmade Jewelry* (1946) at the Museum of Modern Art. It was the first exhibition that acknowledged “wearable art as a movement in America,” and by exhibiting studio jewelers’ work alongside fine artists in such a venue gave credence to the emerging field of jewelry.³⁸ Twenty-five artists and studio craftspeople made a total of 135 pieces of jewelry for the show. Some of the artists included weaver Anni Albers; sculptors Alexander Calder and José de Rivera; jewelers and metalsmiths Margaret De Patta (MAG founder), Harry Bertoia, and Paul Lobel; furniture designer Ward Bennett; painters Julio de Diego and Jacques Lipchitz; and art dealer and filmmaker Julian Levy. The handmade works exhibited contained a variety of avant-garde materials, such as plastic, jacks, safety pins, marbles, and stones and also a current of modernist design tenants. In fact, the museum heralded this new jewelry tradition in its press release for the exhibition: “the Museum of Modern Art shows that today’s jewelry need be neither the princely luxury of precious stones and metals nor the dubious glitter of production-line gadgets sometimes appropriately referred to as ‘junk jewelry.’”³⁹ With such an exhibition, the Museum of Modern Art validated the studio jeweler in an era of commercialized design and elevated jewelry as an art form.

Similar to New York City, San Francisco was an international cultural center steeped in a rich artistic history. In a sign of geographical diversity, artists, writers, and musicians lived in neighborhoods like North Beach as well as East Bay towns like Oakland and Berkeley. Throughout the city there were many concurrent movements influencing the art scene. The Beat Generation writers moved from New York to San Francisco in the 1950s. At the same time, American abstract expressionism made its way from the east coast to San Francisco where it was adopted and transformed into the Bay Area Figurative movement. Metalsmiths and artist-jewelers were not immune to the sweeping changes seen in the arts.

Mid-century California modernism was defined by its regional sense of self-reliance, novelty, innovation, and non-conformity.⁴⁰ That being said, California craftspeople also assimilated modernist ideas into their work. Where New York was a center for high art, California was a “region far more laid back and earthy, provid[ing] a fertile ground for a ‘new craftsman’ movement to take root and grow.”⁴¹ California’s distance from the east coast allowed for resident artists to develop a distinctive approach to modern design. Los Angeles became a hub for the reinterpretation of the American dream and promoted a California lifestyle through art, architecture, film, design, media, and music - which filtered into the American national consciousness.⁴² California also played a dual role in that it supported the “anti-establishment and process-oriented ... value system necessary for the *act of making* that is the hallmark of craft.”⁴³ As California’s population doubled in size between 1949 and 1965, a new sense of independence and confidence captured the region.⁴⁴ Art historian Eudorah M. Moore

believes that California artists' individualistic approach to their work stems from the population's ambitious "frontier syndrome" — a need to be self-sustaining.⁴⁵ This freedom and autonomy lent itself to the artistic diversity among Bay area jewelers.

Pioneering metalsmiths showcased this newfound freedom of expression through the development of their modernist approaches to jewelry design as well as by educating the next generation of jewelers. Through this instruction, a new cannon of modernist jewelry was formed. The aesthetic of both northern and southern California jewelry was as vast as the backgrounds of the jewelers producing the work. California jewelers' collective output was strengthened by established metalsmith programs. In San Francisco, MAG founders Margaret De Patta, Bob Winston, and Peter Macchiarini taught courses and headed the art departments at the California College of Arts and Crafts, the California School of Fine Arts, Mills College, and the California School of Labor. As teachers, they encouraged their students to learn new techniques, use alternative materials, and develop an individual approach to craft and design. Additionally, San Francisco metal artists had the benefit of the newly established Metal Arts Guild headed by De Patta and other leading studio jewelers of the time. The Guild not only provided a source of training to metal artists, but also also was a resource to support their economic interests.

Unlike New York City's artist-jewelers, very few Bay Area jewelers maintained shops. In fact, the vast majority of artist-jewelers worked in home studios and sold their jewelry through art galleries, outdoor art festivals, and local exhibitions as well as San Francisco contemporary craft shops and galleries such as Casper's, Nanny's, and

Fraser's.⁴⁶ MAG jewelers participating in such festivals and exhibitions, and two of the biggest festivals were the juried San Francisco Art Festival and the California State Fair. In addition, regional organizations, such as the San Francisco Society of Women Artists, the Designer Craftsmen of California, and the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco organized independent festivals and exhibitions with local museums and institutions promoting the California artist-craftsman. During this time, Californians were exposed to modern design through exhibitions including: the *Golden Gate International Exhibition* at the World's Fair in San Francisco (1939); *Modern German Sculptors*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1939); *Houses and Housing*, De Young Museum (1940); *Architecture by Mies van de Rohe*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1940); *Silver Jewelry: Pinoda, De Patta, and Bergmann*, De Young Museum (1944); *Modern Jewelry Design*, San Francisco Museum of Art (1947); *Design In the Dining Room*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1949); *California Designed*, De Young Museum (1955); *20th Anniversary Exhibition: Collection of Modern Art in the Bay Area*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1955); and *Designer Craftsmen of the West*, De Young Museum, (1957). These exhibitions showcased the new modernist wave of influence in America and highlighted architecture, fine art, sculpture, and craft.

This chapter introduced the context in which the American studio jewelry movement developed during the mid-twentieth century as a result of the simultaneous emergence of modernism and revival of craft. Leading artists and educational institutions supported the application of various forms of modernism, which in turn transformed the aesthetic of jewelry. Driven by the rise of consumerism, studio jewelers across the

United States found their own paths to reconcile the role of art and industry. New York City and San Francisco became centers for artists to produce modernist jewelry and push for its broad adoption. Bay Area metalsmiths began to realize that there was no organization dedicated to the protection and advancement of studio jewelry. Thus, a group of pioneers came together to form the Metal Arts Guild, which will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2: METAL ARTS GUILD FORMATION AND HISTORY

Chapter two surveys the conditions and events in the 1930s and 1940s that provided momentum for a group of studio jewelers to form the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco (MAG). This chapter connects the evolution of the California labor movement and the California Labor School (CLS) to the expansion of the American studio jewelry movement in San Francisco. In addition, there is an examination of MAG studio jewelers associated with CLS and their interest in the Artist Equity Association (AEA). Finally, this chapter details the formation of MAG in the early 1950s.

The Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco, through its members, played an important role in the American studio jewelry movement. While craft organizations such as the American Craftsmen Cooperative Council led the charge in promoting craft to the American public, MAG was the first organization to focus entirely on jewelry and the metal arts. Although MAG maintained membership with various craft organizations, the Guild was not only formed to promote the metal arts, but also aimed to protect and develop its membership. Until MAG's formation, artists faced a number of political, economic, and legal challenges as individuals. Founding members sought to organize metalworkers in a manner similar to the AEA who protected sculptors and painters.

MAG had a wide-ranging impact on the American Studio Jewelry movement. On a local level, this was felt at university art programs, as MAG members educated the next generation of jewelers and metalsmiths. The Guild actively promoted jewelry as an art form through exhibitions in galleries, festivals, and museums throughout California. In doing so, MAG stirred demand amongst the rising middle class, and provoked interest in

the marketplace. This is due to the fact that their members' work was featured in both local and national publications as well as sold and collected throughout the United States and abroad. MAG members participated in pivotal national and international exhibitions that highlighted studio jewelers. The culmination of these efforts resulted in the acquisition of MAG members' work by national and international museums. Such recognition confirms MAG's importance in the historical accounts of the American studio jewelry movement.

Prior to the formation of MAG in 1951, there was a confluence of events that gave impetus for a group of metalsmiths to organize and specifically address the concerns of metalworkers in the Bay Area. In an era of political unease, several of the artists who were also laborers or teachers, faced an ideological assault on their social beliefs, and their art reflected this undercurrent. Similar to other workers, artists sought the means to earn a living. Many artists were hired to work on Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects and bore witness to some of the worker protest rallies, as they fought for better working conditions and livable wages. (fig. 6) While other organizations, societies, and unions addressed some of the needs of jewelers and craftspeople as a broadly defined group, no single entity covered all of the specific issues facing artist-jewelers and metalsmiths.

Organizations like the American Craftsmen Council focused on educating the craftsperson and promoting craft to the American public. Artists unions, such as the AEA and the San Francisco Artist and Writers Union focused on the economic interests of painters, writers, and sculptors. Studio jewelers did not even qualify to be a member

of the International Jewelry Workers Union (IJWU) because they were independently working, and not affiliated with any industrial union shops. Metalworkers and artist-jewelers observed this disparity and soon realized that their economic interests were unprotected. Therefore, the genesis of artist-jewelers collective activity in San Francisco can be traced to the California labor movement.

California Labor Movement

The vibrant art scene in San Francisco greatly benefited from the influx of federal funds during the interwar years, as many artists went to work under WPA programs as early as 1934. In the eight years that followed, the WPA employed ten-thousand artists.⁴⁷ Prior to these New Deal programs, approximately 20% of all California state workers relied on some form of public relief.⁴⁸ During the recovery from the Great Depression, millions of people went to work on large public projects, such as the construction of the Golden Gate and San Francisco Bay Bridges. Undertaking such infrastructure projects galvanized workers and revitalized organized labor throughout the country.⁴⁹ Under the Section 7(a) of the Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 and the Wagner Act of 1935, workers were “affirmed rights to bargain collectively.”⁵⁰ Strikes were common as men, women, and minorities fought for the improvement of wages and working conditions. Artists employed under the WPA umbrella documented this struggle through the visual arts. Joshua Paddison addressed this in his essay, “The Great California Labor Art Movement,” in *At Work: The Art of California Labor:*

The period's dramatic labor struggles acted as inspiration for a diverse but remarkably likeminded group of California Visual artists. Committed leftists, these artists turned the course of California art away from the postimpressionist landscapes of the early twentieth century toward social realism. Heavily influenced by the Mexican muralists who visited the state during the late 1920s and 1930s, California artists strive to capture the often violent labor struggles they read about on the front page and witnessed with their own eyes. Many of these artists found support from the various public art projects of the New Deal, joining the hundreds of thousands of Californians who needed the help of the federal government to survive the depression.⁵¹

Some of the federal programs that put artists to work included: the Public Works of Art Projects (PWAP), the Section of Painting and Sculpture (SPAS), the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP), the Federal Art Project (FAP), the Index of American Design (IAD), the Farm Security Administration (FSA), the Federal Writers Project (FWP), and the Federal Theatre Project (FTP). While President Franklin D. Roosevelt was hesitant to support the arts in the middle of the Depression, his advisor Harry Hopkins reminded him that “[artists] have got to eat just like other people!”⁵² Working on such projects, many of the painters, sculptors, photographers, and metalsmiths, found themselves involved with, and affected by, the labor and social movements of the time.

A number of important artists came to work in San Francisco under these federal projects. Painter Maynard Dixon, brother of coppersmith and MAG founder Harry Dixon (and was also the husband of FSA photographer Dorothea Lange), worked on many of the federal work programs in and around San Francisco. Muralist and declared Communist Diego Rivera, along with his wife painter Frida Kahlo, came to San Francisco in 1930 after being commissioned for the mural program under the PWAP.

While living and working out of Ralph Stackpole's studio at 716 Montgomery Street in the North Beach section of San Francisco, Diego produced three works: *Allegory of California* (1931) at the Pacific Stock Exchange Club; *The Making of a Fresco, Showing the Building of a City* (1931) at the San Francisco Art Institute; and *Pan-American Unity* (1940) — created as part of the Art in Action section of the *Golden Gate International Exposition* on Treasure Island.⁵³ The subject matter of these works encouraged American painters and sculptors to “engage contemporary and historical themes with an eye toward their social significance; which is to say, to link art, history, and public identity in the mural format.”⁵⁴ Artists implemented this new model for American murals in the 1933 Coit Tower project. This project stirred controversy over its anti-American content, and even resulted in Congressional hearings. This would not be the last time Congress would get involved with matters related to art. Several artists involved in the Coit Tower project included: Ralph Stackpole, Lucien Labaudt, Bernard Zakhein, Mallette Dean, and Victor Arnautoff – who were self-declared Communists and also founding members of the San Francisco Artist and Writers Union (1933). Future founding MAG members Peter Macchiarini and Harry Dixon went to work as laborers on many of Stackpole's projects. Many of the WPA artists, like Macchiarini, Dixon, and Arnautoff would go on to teach at the leading California art institutions, such as the California Labor School.

California Labor School

As funding for the federal art projects came to an end, the U.S. Government shifted its focus to vocational training programs for returning veterans. The G.I. Bill afforded servicemen the opportunity to return to school tuition-free. One school in particular that benefited from the influx of returning G.I.'s, was the privately financed Tom Mooney Labor School (which subsequently changed its name to the California Labor School (CLS), and had locations throughout California. (fig. 7) The school first opened its doors in 1942 in San Francisco, and received its accreditation in 1944.⁵⁵ (fig. 8) CLS financing came from unions, wealthy residents of San Francisco, CLS Carnival Fundraisers, and the Communist party (a source which would later become a point of contention). (fig. 9) The CLS mission was to serve as the educational arm of the labor movement and train returning veterans, immigrants, minorities, women, and workers. Between 1942 and 1947, CLS trained over 75,000 students among all its locations.⁵⁶ CLS welcomed every nationality, race, and religion. In a document entitled, "Role of the California Labor School In the Labor Movement and In the Community," CLS made a clear statement:

The School recognizes and teaches the equality of all American minorities: The Negro, Mexican, Japanese-American, Jewish-American and Chinese-American in all fields. We are working and teaching against discrimination, both subtle and open, on the basis of religion, race, color or national origin. The California Labor School welcomes all democratic elements in the community as teachers and students, and devotes a large part of its curriculum to the understanding of minority problems and the development of unity among the American people.⁵⁷