Tragedy befell an unsuspecting nation on Black Tuesday, October 29, 1929. The Wall Street Crash. The fall of the stock market acted as a catalyst, setting off a chain reaction of unforeseen magnitude. The future of the nation was jeopardized as the economic structure collapsed. In the face of this imminent disaster President Hoover's efforts were futile. By 1932, the country's industrial production had been cut in half; crop prices plunged; floods and drought complicated the situation; construction in the city came to a halt; approximately fourteen million members of the labor force were unemployed.

On March 4, 1933, in the midst of what historians refer to as the Great Depression, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated. He perceived that the burden of recovery was the responsibility of the government, and thus his New Deal set out to restore stability to a suffering nation. The closing of the banks and the institution of federal controls during the Hundred Days were the first steps toward relief from the crisis. With a sense of urgency, Roosevelt led the country into a new phase of history.

The crisis touched all. The years immediately after the crash were the most difficult for the populace to overcome. As personal misfortunes multiplied, Americans realized they could no longer indulge in the prosperity they had grown accustomed to during the twenties. Individuals reacted diversely. Some Americans escaped the pessimism which the overall situation generated, while others were obsessed with it. Therefore, parody, misery, compassion, solitude, perseverance, submission were some of the attitudes which were visible throughout the decade.

FDR's administration subsidized the arts, enabling a documentation of responses to the era. The Federal Art Projects and the historical section of the Farm Security Administration, both organized in 1935 under the Works Progress Administration, provided assistance for painters, sculptors, printmakers, film makers, and photographers. The projects' functions were not only to keep artists employed, but were also a means of reviving an endangered American tradition. Thus, within a structured framework, the artists had the freedom to develop and expand upon individual styles. In effect, these artists were instrumental in shaping the future of American art.

In our exhibition, "The Thirties: Reactions to Crisis", we are attempting to re-create a decade of American history as seen through the eyes of its artists. This collection of art work produced both within and outside the Works Progress Administration during the years 1929 through 1941 reflects our impressions. Each artist reacts to the time he lives in in a personal way and this quality is visible in his or her work. In addition, the printed word, the movie, and the music aid us to better comprehend the atmosphere of these years. Our intention is not to be nostalgic. It is the humanistic aspect of the art which appeals to us. The images produced have become the remembered reality of the Great Depression.

This exhibition was created by the first year graduate students in Museology as partial fulfillment for the Master of Fine Arts degree:
Laith Berenson
Harriet Dubowski
Barbara D. Greene
David G. Hopkins
Susan L. Rubright
Penny Schwartz

Cover: DOROTHEA LANGE Migrant Mother 1936

GEORGE SCHREIBER From Arkansas

Lois Berenson Harriet Dubowski
From the dream symbols in cave paintings of prehistoric man to the early Greeks smiling discovery of themselves as HOMO SAPIENS; from the mystic naturalism of Gothic ornament to the minutiae color separations in Chuck Close's recent head drawings, the search for authentic norms of reality has been a constant in art throughout time. It has come from within the individual artist as a private quest and forms of it have been sponsored officially with political ends in view. In modern times, among Western peoples who have sought new lives in unfamiliar lands, it has been a main if inevitably uphill way toward the rediscovery of art itself.

The art of the American Depression years can be seen today as a culmination of nearly a century's journey toward these goals, attained soon afterwards in the birth of a truly American leadership in the arts. But it has perhaps never been quite thought of or looked at squarely as the immediate native forerunner of the national artistic ascendency that began in the 1950's, identifiable with it in the common affinity for "real" experience and this both to American subject matter and imaginative tradition.

The students of the Syracuse University museum training program who have independently selected, documented, and organized this multi-media review of the "recorded reality of the Great Depression" have brought stunningly to the fore much of the social as well as artistic evidence of this threshold of America's coming of age in art, one which, because of the scars and shadows of social distress, has been passed over by criticism too lightly in the recent past and which, as we consider present challenges, offers much of compelling interest and insight.

Stanton L. Catlin
Director, Museum Training Program
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Lowel Art Center
Syracuse University
Syracuse, New York 13210

March 31 - April 17, 1974

S. L. MARGOLIES

Storm Over City Hall
U.S. TO MOVE DUST BOWL FARMERS
Roosevelt Sounds Call to Battle for "True Freedom"

President Urges Need Now of Men Like Jefferson

WISEPHOTO—Roosevelt Speaking at Thomas Jefferson's Home

Areas in Five States to Be Deserted With Federal Help

Selassie Plea Fails, League Closes Issue

Lewis' Agents Begin Drive In Steel Mills

King Edward May Wed Holiday Toll His Own Second Cousin Exceeds 100,000

6 Dies in State

Traffic Claims 44

20 Brownies Found In Lake Bush 2 Million

of S. U. Shacks