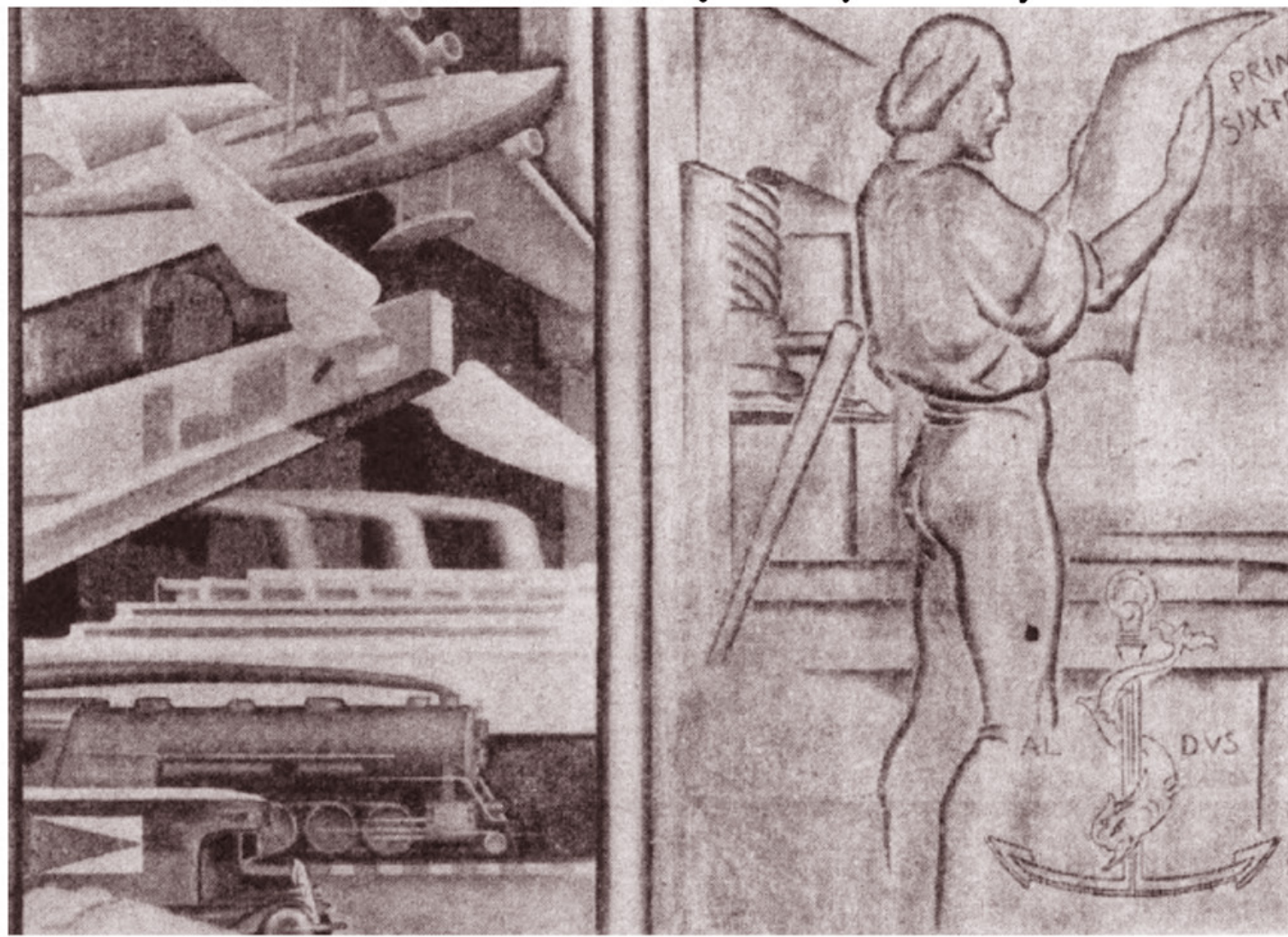


Murals in the Office

Many Painters Compete in Contest Designed to Make American Business Men More Conscious of the Influence of Art



Prize-winning design by Dunbar Beck

Almost 6,000 years ago an Egyptian herdsman, worried for fear that some of his prize stock would be appropriated by another, went out into the pasture, and, taking a sharp, metal instrument, scratched a peculiar mark in the hide on the side of his cattle. It was the first brand, and, in a sense, the first label. Later, small stones, bits of marble, even disks of clay were made, and marked with distinguishing symbols to give them individuality, and as a sign of identifiable ownership.

In the passing of another thousand years, Egyptian wine-merchants began stamping mud seals on their bottles and skins of wine. A few years later, Chinese artists in pottery began not only labeling their wares, but adding a bit of advertising for their studios. The earliest known combination of this sort was made in 2698 B.C., and the most naïve and interesting is that signed by a painter not long thereafter. The original painting is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art at New York, and, in addition to the signature of the artist, there is this candid bid for more work: "If you like my painting, you may find me at the Bridge of Man-Chu."

Art in Industry

A few months ago the executives of a large label-manufacturing firm in New York decided to dramatize the history of labels, and the sublimation of art in industry. A contest was arranged, and muralists, employed or unemployed, were invited to submit designs. Two purposes were in mind: the turning of muralists' attention to the importance of industrial design, and the turning of business men's attention to the importance of art in commerce, and its profound influence as a sales-builder, as a psychological factor tending to soothe the customer, and attract him to the particular firm utilizing murals in its offices.

Murals in the Office

In order that something concrete might be achieved, four schemes were asked for, each to relate to the use, manufacture or origin of labels. Dimensions of the walls to be decorated were given, the prize-money decided on.

An enormous response followed. Muralists, both famed and humble, submitted designs. A jury was selected, and, from that welter of response, four were awarded prizes. First prize was awarded to Dunbar Beck, of New York, a *Prix de Rome* scholarship-winner, for a dramatic mural depicting the manufacture and use of labels. Kenneth B. Loomis, Charles Goeller, and Charles S. Dean received the other awards. Mr. Beck also received the commission to paint the walls of the company's office.

Arthur Crisp, one of the muralists who decorated Rockefeller Center, and a member of the jury, jolted several of the competing artists when, at the award-dinner, he said: "Business needs art, but the artist often puts himself out of a job by thinking that his artistic ideals are too sacred to compromise with business. That is nonsense. The American public has been made art-conscious through commercial advertising; and, if art is to be extended to business surroundings, and become a part of our daily life, as it should be, the artist will respect the business man's idea, and will collaborate with him."

For at least the last five years there has been a conspicuous knitting together of the purposes of business men and artists. Having painted most of the country's public buildings, having spread dramatic conceptions of art and industry on the walls of more than a dozen important buildings or groups of buildings throughout the country, muralists suddenly have found that they are wanted in the offices of corporations.