Winold Reiss As A Portraitist

When Winold Reiss accepted the Cincinnati Union Terminal commission in 1931, he had already created a corpus of multicultural imagery in his artwork unequalled by any other living American artist. That body of work derived in large part from his love of ethnic diversity, an infatuation he had brought with him to America. As a German who had migrated in 1913 to the United States to escape Bismarckian nationalism, Reiss had also been drawn to America because of its diverse racial groups. Although Germany today is better known for its tradition of racism from the Nazis of the 1930s to the skinheads of the 1990s, Reiss is a reminder that a tradition of romantic idealism and humanism, reflected in the thought of Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Heinrich Heine, and Wilhelm Dilthey, existed in Germany at the turn of the century. Reiss's art reflected what these better known intellectuals extolled in their writings — that unity in diversity was one of the highest goals of modern civilization. Like those other German immigrants, the Ohio Hegelians, who had come to Cincinnati in the nineteenth century, Reiss was — dare we say it in the 1990s — a liberal. And his multicultural mosaics reflect a powerful interpretation of Cincinnati in the 1930s from a liberal humanistic viewpoint. For while Reiss's sharply etched portraits of Cincinnati's mayor, railroad owner, and engineer have a special place in the Terminal, Reiss's mosaics of anonymous workers, builders, and travelers of Cincinnati's and America's history remain the more compelling images to us today. I believe Reiss wanted to tell us that the workers, the builders, the Indian pioneers, and the Black dockworkers are the really important people in America, and that is why he made their images so big and impressive in this American mosaic monument.

The man who provided Cincinnati with such an inclusive vision of itself was born on September 16, 1886, in Karlsruhe, the former capital of the state of Baden in southern Germany. He was the second son of Fritz Reiss (1857-1914), the well-known landscape artist, who was also known for his sympathetic portraits of German peasants. Winold Reiss inherited his father's talent for drawing and his belief that the artist must travel in order to find the best and most interesting subjects for portraiture. It may have been Fritz Reiss who also stimulated his son's interest in distinctive ethnic types. Winold spent his early years traveling with his father throughout Germany as Reiss the elder hunted down the particular types of peasants that he wanted to paint and draw. But Winold's interest in depicting the different features and cultures of peasants also had deeper roots in the peculiarly German fascination with human diversity, even within Germany itself. When Winold Reiss was born, Germany had been only recently unified, and most Germans still thought of themselves in regional terms, as Prussians, Bavarians, for example. Those from different states of Germany were sometimes regarded as constituting different races. Winold Reiss became fascinated by such regional differences when he returned to Germany as an adult artist in 1922 and produced numerous portraits of German peasants. Like the photographer August Sander, Reiss was fascinated by type portraiture of people from different occupations as well as regions, and that interest also informed his narrative portrayal in the Cincinnati Union Terminal. In his representation of Cincinnati's workers, for example, Reiss tried to portray the distinguishing type of the industrial worker, the river boat captain, and the dockworker. A creative tension existed between his desire to capture the individuality of his sitters and his desire to record the typical features of a class or ethnic group. No better examples of that tension exist than his mosaic portraits in the Cincinnati Union Terminal.

Even before coming to America in 1913, Winold Reiss was more captivated by painting Indians than by painting the German peasants his father so loved. Young German boys of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries feasted on western stories of adventure written by James Fenimore Cooper, the American romanticist, and Karl May, the German author who pioneered the old “Shatterhand” stories of a German-speaking hero in the Wild West. As a young boy, Reiss envisioned America as a natural paradise in which Indians and White men lived dramatic lives and good people triumphed over the “bad men.” Reiss may have imbibed from this literature the belief that Indians were dying out in the inevitable forward
march of civilization. Hints at such an evolutionary narrative abound in the Cincinnati Union Terminal rotunda mural, where progress marches from the dog travois to the railroad and airplane, and the Indians appear bypassed, if not forgotten, by the advance of history. Winold Reiss may very well have seen his portraits of Indians as part of a mission to preserve the memory and contribution of the Indian, despite their inevitable displacement. Like Fritz Reiss, who tramped around Germany recording the peasant visage his contemporaries thought was fast disappearing, Winold Reiss traveled the dusty roads of America inspired to record the races most Americans thought marginal to American progress.

Reiss, however, never let his love of the past or his interest in type portraiture interfere with his aesthetic motivation to foster a truly modern art in America. Always a modernist, whether drawing a portrait, a poster, or an interior, Reiss was interested in the decorative and the beautiful, and that interest kept his art from ever becoming merely ethnographic fascination. That decorative modernism came from Germany as well, though not from his father. It derived from the teachers he studied with in Munich in the 1910s, especially Franz Stuck, of the Royal Academy of Fine Art in Munich, and Julius Diez, of the Kunstgewerbeschule. Stuck helped originate Jugendstil, or youth style, Germany’s late nineteenth century response to France’s Art Nouveau movement, while Diez took Jugendstil another step and applied its principles to poster making, interior decoration, and commercial design. As a graphic arts movement, Jugendstil used bright colors, flat surfaces, and design motifs to embellish both fine and commercial art. Indeed, Jugendstil challenged modern artists to overcome the long-entrenched division between fine and applied art, which became particularly important early in the twentieth century when Germany became a leader in industrial and commercial design. When Winold Reiss went to school in Germany, artists were expected to work in both fine and commercial arts, and blend insights from the one into the other. At the Kunstgewerbeschule, for example, Reiss mastered lettering, box making, poster design, advertisements, and interior decoration. Such training well prepared him for the Cincinnati commission, a commercial venture that allowed him to showcase the diversity of his own talents as well as his ethnic vision.

Indeed, the opportunity to exploit his broad talent may have been the most important factor in his decision to migrate to America. Although Reiss always recalled publicly that he came to America primarily to paint the Indians, he also knew America offered virgin territory for his talents, especially compared to Germany which was full of similarly trained artists. Shortly after his arrival in New York City in 1913, he was a success: Winold illustrated several books and magazines, designed commercial interiors, lectured before the Art Students League, and founded a publication, Modern Art Collector, to promote the bold use of color in advertising design. Reiss even gained a student following at the Winold Reiss Art School, which he established in his studio on Christopher Street. But the United States’ entry into World War I choked off his career, as anti-German hostility swept the nation in 1917. Forced to move his family upstate to Woodstock, Reiss relied heavily on his Swiss-English wife to negotiate his contracts, since his heavy German accent readily identified him as one of the “enemy.” Nevertheless, through hard work and persistence, Reiss survived and actually became one of the founding fathers of the legendary Woodstock artist community. When he obtained a lucrative commission in 1919 to modernize the interior of the Crillon restaurant, Reiss used the money to fund his first love, the trip to Browning, Montana, to paint the Indians.

Winold Reiss was thirty-three-years old when he boarded a train from New York City west to Browning, Montana, the reservation of the Blackfeet Indians. He recalled to an interviewer what happened. “I arrived at Browning at three in the morning, in a fierce blizzard. A kind of a ‘bus’ took us to the hotel, which was almost dark. Entering I found the clerk asleep in a big chair, and when I requested lodging he said very gruffly there wasn’t any. I argued that I could not go back into the storm and that he must let me lay my terribly tired head somewhere. He finally told me I could share the ‘bunk’ of a cowboy [sic] upstairs, at the back of the building. I mounted by candle light and entered a loft in which the one bed was already occupied, and the cowboy’s Wild West outfit was piled on the only chair. As I crowded in beside him the sleeper only grunted, and I fast joined him and knew no more until broad daylight. When I wakened my bedfellow had gone, and as I felt for my wad of money under our one pillow found it still there. Looking out of the window, I saw eight or ten very tall Indians in Buffalo coats and huge fur caps standing silently in the snowy enclosure before the hotel. I went down at once, intending to make their acquaintance without knowing how, but, acting on impulse, I walked up to the tallest brave and slapped him on the back to his utter astonishment.
Another, a half-breed who spoke English, asked what I wanted. I said I had come all the way from Europe to make the acquaintance of my Indian brother. The interpreter’s explanation brought a handclasp, smile and nod that passed all down the line. Reiss, fortunate not to be struck dead on the spot by the man whose back he slapped — Turtle, a six feet tall, sinewy strong young Blackfoot hunter — readily made friends with the Blackfeet, who then allowed him to draw them. By the time of his death in 1953, Reiss had produced hundreds of portraits of the Blackfeet and had included one of his portraits of Turtle, his first friend among the Blackfeet, in the rotunda mosaic wall mural that adorns the interior of the Cincinnati Union Terminal.

Reiss produced some of his best Blackfeet portraits on that first trip to Browning, for these works of art were distinguished by their wonderful detail and powerful modelling of their faces and forms. His portrait of Turtle seemed to give his sitter's face a three dimensional depth and presence. Reiss achieved this effect in part by flattening the body of his subject in a manner reminiscent of the Jugendstil posters he had seen in Munich. Drawing quickly with crayon, charcoal, and conte pencil on paper, Reiss seemed to have time only to sketch his subjects' marvelous heads, a technique that emphasized the character and force of personality of his subjects. Such economy of expression gave his 1919 portraits a power and dignity rarely seen in Indian portraits by other White artists of the period. Reiss’s exhibit in New York in 1920 of the thirty-six portraits from this trip was a hit. The entire collection was purchased by Dr. Phillip Cole, a New York doctor from Montana, who knew many of the subjects Reiss had drawn. But Reiss lacked sufficient funds to support another trip to Montana, and without access to the models, he could not produce any more Indian portraits. Funding did become available for Winold to travel with his student, W. Langdon Kihn, to Mexico in 1922. Although a civil war raged in Mexico during his trip, Reiss walked through such states as Morelos, Oaxaca, and Pueblo, and even visited Zapata’s headquarters at Cuernavaca, sketching soldiers, bandits, and revolutionaries wherever he went. Upon his return to New York, Reiss published several of the portraits in a special issue of the Survey Graphic, a social reform magazine, edited by Katherine Anne Porter. But no market existed for such portraits back in New York City. With a son to support and alimony to pay — his wife divorced him in the early 1920s — Reiss had to devote most of his time to interior design. It was not until June 1927, that Reiss again visited Browning, Montana, and had the opportunity to continue drawing the Blackfeet people.

This trip occurred, however, only after Reiss had begun to explore the portraiture of another American ethnic group — that of the African American. Commissioned by the Survey Graphic magazine to illustrate a special issue on Blacks in Harlem, Winold Reiss and his brother, Hans Reiss, trekked almost daily up to Harlem to select models from the vibrant working class there to pose back in his studio in Greenwich Village. In addition, he invited numerous African American artists and intellectuals, such as Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, Zora Neale Hurston, and W.E.B. Du Bois, to his studio for portraits as well. The photographs of these portraits became the hit of the very popular Survey Graphic’s March 1, 1925 issue, “Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro.” Reproduced in color in the book version, The New Negro: An Interpretation, edited by Alain Locke, another Black intellectual, Reiss’s pastel portraits made as powerful a statement for racial dignity as anything else in the volume.

Two years later, Reiss traveled to South Carolina, again under the auspices of Survey Graphic, but this time to assist the Penn School on the Sea Islands by creating a series of indelible images of African American residents who had
After he entered into his relationship with Great Northern Railroad, Reiss devoted more attention to the clothing and dress of his subjects. In "Lazy Boy in his Medicine Robes," Reiss gave much greater treatment to the dress of his subject than in his 1919 portraits. (Figure #2)
lived isolated off the coast of South Carolina for over two hundred years. Reiss's experience in the Harlem Renaissance and in South Carolina probably shaped his decision to include images of African Americans in the Cincinnati Union Terminal mosaics.

Reiss's first love, however, was always painting Indians, and in 1927, he found an opportunity to go back out West and resume his Indian portraiture when his work came to the attention of Louis W. Hill, the president of the Great Northern Railroad. Hill owned several hotels in Glacier Park and had come up with the idea to use the Indian theme to attract tourists. He employed Indians to greet tourists at the station, to entertain guests at the hotel, and he had even invited artists to draw portraits of the Blackfeet. During the summer of 1925, Hill met Hans Reiss who convinced Hill to invite his brother Winold to Glacier Park to draw portraits of Indians. In the summer of 1927, Reiss returned to Montana, this time under the auspices of the Great Northern Railroad. Great Northern paid him to travel from New York to Glacier Park, gave him a studio in East Glacier, and paid his living expenses for the summer in Glacier. Hill wanted a quantity of Blackfeet portraits to illustrate the Great Northern calendars, and these Reiss supplied. Moreover, Hill purchased all fifty-two portraits that Reiss drew that summer. He spent the next two summers in Glacier Park, returned again in 1931, and then, after a brief hiatus, from 1934 to 1937 ran the Winold Reiss Summer School at Glacier Park. In 1943 he returned to Montana on his final study trip to conclude what was the longest running and most profitable patronage relationship that Reiss would enjoy in his long career.

Not surprisingly, Reiss's portraits changed after he entered into his relationship with the Great Northern Railroad. With more time to draw his subjects, Reiss's portraits became more detailed and complete, as he devoted more attention to the clothing and dress of his subjects. In "Lazy Boy in His Medicine Robes" Reiss gave much greater treatment to the dress of his subject than he had done in his 1919 portraits. Even more dramatic, Reiss filled in the background of this portrait with symbols that evoked designs that the Blackfeet drew on their tepees. The shift in attention reflected Reiss's increased interest in the material culture of the Blackfeet people and his growth as an artist: these portraits were far more complex and suggested Reiss had begun to integrate the ethnographic interest of his portraiture with the decorative interest of his commercial art. Reiss exploited this tension between naturalism and abstraction most successfully in his mosaic murals in the rotunda of the Cincinnati terminal.

More subtle was the way the dress of Reiss's sitters changed during his Glacier Park years. Most of his 1919 portraits showed the Blackfeet in the everyday dress worn around town or the reservation. In the portraits Reiss drew after 1927, many more of the Blackfeet appeared in formal dress. This shift may have reflected what Reiss saw. From 1927 on, he was able to attend the Sun Dance, the religious celebration of the Blackfeet, held in Browning each summer. On such occasions, dress of the type that Lazy Boy wore would have been appropriate. In other cases, however, the formal dress of Reiss's sitters seemed inappropriate, even if flattering. A later portrait of Turtle done under the auspices of Great Northern showed Turtle in a sumptuous shirt and Sioux headdress that Turtle, a poor man, probably did not own.

To Reiss, such issues were not very important. He was an artist, after all, and not an ethnographer; and he liked to draw fancy dress outfits for their decorative value. But the prevalence of formally attired subjects in Reiss's later portraits may also have reflected his desire to satisfy the tastes of his Great Northern patrons who, generally speaking, preferred formally dressed subjects for their calendars and their hotel entertainment. Louis Hill pos-
Queen City Heritage

sessed one of the largest collections of Blackfeet clothing in the world, and was sometimes seen wearing Sioux headdress in Glacier Park.13 As most patrons have shaped the work of artists they support, Louis Hill and his agents, if only by the portraits that they purchased, subtly influenced Reiss’s work. Even so, Reiss, always an independent-minded man, continued to paint Blackfeet in everyday dress, often producing two portraits of the same sitters.

With better artist supplies — Great Northern shipped his canvases and other materials out to Glacier by train — Reiss produced much larger portraits after 1927. His 1919 portraits measuring 19 by 14 inches had been limited by the size of paper he could bring with him. Such papers were only large enough for him to capture the head and shoulders of his sitters. But starting in 1927, Reiss produced several full-length portraits of “Shot Both Sides” “Pete After Buffalo and Night Shoot” and “Bob Riding Black Horse.” These large portraits allowed Reiss to show off their dress outfits and to situate his subjects by including bits of landscape and his signature marshmallow clouds. Such large portraits (generally 80 by 36 inches) looked ahead to the double life-size portraits of the Blackfeet that adorned the walls of the Cincinnati rotunda. Like “Pete After Buffalo” “Turtle” appears full-sized in the History of Transportation section of the Cincinnati mural; and he is formally dressed in the clothing of the Bear Society and seems, to the uninitiated, as if he is ready to head off on a hunt. Turtle, in short, appears in 1933 in scene, as part of a romantic narrative that is reminiscent of the Karl May westerns that Reiss had read as a boy.

For the Cincinnati commission, Reiss portrayed the Blackfeet as characters in the narrative of American progress, rather than as the complex, introspective personalities they had been in his earlier portraits. His representations of Turtle and Middle Rider were no longer portraits, but ideal types of the Indian who had lost most

Beginning in 1927 Reiss produced several full-length portraits, 80 by 36 inches, which allowed him to show off their dress outfits as in “Shot Both Sides,” (Figure #4); “Pete After Buffalo and Night Shoot,” (Figure #5); and “Bob Riding Black Horse.” (Figure #6)
In the Union Terminal mural Turtle appears full-sized and formally dressed in the clothing of the Bear Society. (Figure #7)

His representations of Turtle and Middle Rider were no longer portraits, but ideal types of the Indian who had lost most of their individuality. (Figure #8)
of their individuality. The balance between the individual and the type, which was always a delicate balance in his portraits, was tilted towards type in this mural. Such a shift in emphasis was, of course, consistent with his commission to produce an epic history of transportation in the terminal. In such a mural, the narrative dominated the portrayal of his subjects as real people. Quite simply, Reiss had borrowed two of his Blackfeet friends to perform in this pageant to American progress. But Reiss had been determined to bring along his Indian friends to the Cincinnati mural project, despite their difficult fit in his narrative history of American transportation.

Reiss also brought along his interest in African American life and art. Reiss had played a unique role in the construction of the Black image in the 1920s when he illustrated a special issue of Survey Graphic magazine devoted to the new sense of creativity in Harlem. Working closely with guest editor Alain Locke, the Black philosopher and critic, Reiss met and drew portraits of a cross section of the Black community, including laborers, singers, ministers, sociologists, and the writers who were the “New Negroes,” the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance literary movement of the mid-1920s. Reiss’s interaction with the “New Negroes” was particularly important because it sensitized him to how Black intellectuals regarded their negative portrayal in the mainstream media. His pastel portraits of civil rights leaders, such as W.E.B. Du Bois and anonymous people from Harlem’s streets captured the pride and self-confidence of the Black community in the urban North of the post-World War I era. In addition, Reiss created the visual “jazz aesthetic” of the Harlem Renaissance with his abstract imaginative designs that evoked the nightlife of Harlem. Rather than a superficial fad, Reiss’s interest in the African American subject was deep and one he returned to again in his portraits of South Carolina Sea Islanders in 1927 and in portraits of other African American heroes.

When Reiss approached his commission to chronicle Cincinnati’s history, he wanted to include African Americans in his mosaics. But Reiss lacked the time to make extensive forays into the Black community of Cincinnati to find subjects for his mosaics. Having been brought onto the project after it had been started, and by the heads of the railroad who probably cared very little about the representation of Blacks in a mural to Cincinnati and American transportation, Reiss lacked the kind of interaction with significant African American leaders that he had enjoyed on the Harlem project. Such contact might have allowed Reiss to include portraits of such significant local educational leaders as Jennie Porter and Wendell Phillips Dabney in his mosaic history of Cincinnati, along
with the portraits of unskilled laborers that did appear. 18 As a result, his Cincinnati Union Terminal images of African Americans offered a much narrower view of the Black community than those Reiss had created in his Harlem series.

Not surprisingly, the two Black figures that appear in the rotunda mural and the lone Black youth in the “Chemicals and Drugs” concourse mosaic wear less well today than those he created for the Survey Graphic. Whereas the Harlem portrayals seem quite contemporary in their appearance, the Cincinnati African Americans seem more dated and germane to the period of the early 1930s. On the rotunda, the stooped-over Black man on the left seems a character out of the song “Ol’ Man River,” which even the militant Black actor Paul Robeson sang in the 1932 revival of the play “Showboat.” 19 Despite the marvelous detail that Reiss brings to this anonymous worker’s face and arms, this man’s action recalls that song’s famous line, “tote dat barge, lift dat bale” of cotton—which this figure is about to do. Similarly, Reiss gives the Black youth in the “Chemicals and Drugs” concourse mosaic a sensitivity and poignancy that transcends that of the less carefully drawn White supervisor in the background — a clue perhaps about which character Reiss sympathized with in this scene. But Reiss’s sympathetic treatment of the youth is counterbalanced by the expression on the boy’s face and in his eyes, which seems to suggest he is about to reply “Yassum” to his White supervisor’s request to place the pail of liquid chemical on the floor near him.

What rescues these images from merely...
stereotypical characterization is the recognition that Reiss sketched them from direct observation in Cincinnati and that these images tell us more about the conditions of labor and life in Cincinnati than about Reiss himself. Although such images may make some of us uncomfortable today, they are documentary studies of what Black life was like in Cincinnati during the thirties. When we compare Reiss’s depiction of the Black figure to the right in the rotunda mosaic with a photograph of that man taken around the same time, we see that Reiss’s rendition is a faithful representation of the man and his personality. The postures, behaviors, and expressions Reiss recorded were those forced from African Americans who were drastically underemployed and ruthlessly segregated in housing, education, and public accommodations in Cincinnati. A city on the Ohio River, Cincinnati was still a trading center for southern cotton and employed large numbers of Black laborers to offload the boats. As a Depression era city trying to reserve the better jobs for its White working class, Cincinnati relegated Black construction workers to unskilled, labor-intensive jobs such as ditch diggers. And as

In the “Chemicals and Drugs” concourse mosaic Reiss gave the Black youth a sensitivity and poignancy that transcends that of the less carefully drawn White supervisor in the background. (Figures #14 and 15)
their absence from all but one of Reiss's industrial mosaics attests, Blacks were the “last hired and first fired” in Cincinnati's industries during the Great Depression. Taken as a whole, then, Reiss's type portraits of Black men in the Cincinnati Union Terminal mosaics are subtle critiques of the conditions of employment for Blacks during the 1930s.

Reiss's portrayal of European Americans in the Cincinnati Union Terminal are just as revealing. Of course, Reiss had drawn portraits of Europeans in Germany, and had made numerous portraits of Americans once he reached this country in 1913. His portraits of the actors and artists who frequented his studio on Christopher Street are stunning documents of the Greenwich Village lifestyle. In addition, Reiss was often commissioned by wealthy men — or their wives — to do their portraits, and generally he was quite obliging. But frankly, the results were not always pleasing. Some of his sitters complained that his portraits were unflattering. In a sense, they were right. In “Portrait of a Man (4)” it is difficult to tell whether it is the man’s rigidity or Reiss's lack of enthusiasm for him that is responsible for the portrait's stiffness. As in his ethnic portraits, Reiss was drawing a type here as well, and the upper class businessman type was one with which Reiss could not identify. When he came to draw the important men associated with the Terminal, its president, the chief engineer, and the mayor of Cincinnati — all of whom he sketched while in Cincinnati — he achieved more flattering likenesses, but not very compelling ones. This is ironic because Reiss made several study drawings of these men on his trips to Cincinnati. His drawing of Mr. Waite was the most interesting, because his floating head and bespectacled eyes seemed focused as much inward as outward on the dramatized scenery of the mural. These images of the fathers of the Cincinnati Union Terminal were honored with placement on their own separate walls and were the only true portraits or likenesses of themselves as individuals on the mural. But these three men seem stilted and isolated in their own world, perhaps a comment on how Reiss felt about the leaders of urban and industrial America.

By contrast, Reiss’s depictions of European-American workers were dynamic and alive. Reiss must have been inspired by Cincinnati's industrial laborers when he visited them on his study trips, because the images that he produced of them have greater presence and a power than the rest of his mosaics. Their distinctive attribute as images is their pose: the workers were always shown in action, hard at work — lifting, cutting, pouring, and building America. More than their faces, we see their bodies, often

The postures, behaviors, and expressions Reiss recorded were those of African Americans who were drastically underemployed and segregated in Cincinnati's housing, education, and public accommodations. (Figure #16)

Some of Reiss's portrait models complained that his portraits were unflattering. In "Portrait of a Man (4)" it is difficult to tell whether it is the man’s rigidity or Reiss's lack of enthusiasm for him that is responsible for the portrait's stiffness. (Figure #17)
from the rear, which is Reiss's way of emphasizing their strength and their physiques, and their engagement. They are preoccupied, immersed in activity, and coping with the Depression as Reiss himself coped with setbacks and disappointment: by working. With these images, Reiss wanted to inspire Cincinnati during the Great Depression with a vision of itself and America working despite its economic problems.

The process by which Reiss constructed these images is interesting as well. Sometime in 1931, Reiss visited several Cincinnati industries and made on site sketches of the men in action. But Reiss lacked the time to make extensive drawings of the individual workers in Cincinnati. So he borrowed some of the workers' clothing, brought it back to his New York studio, and used models to draw the workers. Even his son Tjark Reiss posed for several of the workers, including the Railroad Worker, although his father altered Tjark's features to insure each of the figures would be distinct. In some instances, Winold Reiss used professional models as stand-ins; on other occasions, he commandeered friends and acquaintances who dropped by his studio to be models. The man in the vest talking on the telephone in the concourse mosaic saluting “Radio Broadcasting” was Allan Crane, a New York lithographer and art student of Winold Reiss. The man wearing a royal blue jacket and posing as a colonial American in rotunda mosaic was Mr. von Gevernitz, a German visitor who just happened to stop by the Reiss's studio one day. Von Gevernitz's features fit what Reiss had been looking for and when asked if he wanted to be in the mural, von Gevernitz said yes. In a sense, von Gevernitz was a lot like Turtle: both were living individuals who were transformed by the narrative theme of the rotunda mosaic into historical archetypes. By donning the clothes of a colonial, a German immigrant became an American.

That transformation signified Reiss's own process of Americanization. In Germany, Reiss had started the process of symbolically becoming an American when he had read those Wild West stories as a young boy and fallen in love with American Indians. Playing cowboys and
Indians with his friends, Reiss had learned to be an American by acting out Indian rituals of slapping each other on the back, as he would later do to Turtle. After coming to America in 1913, Reiss had identified more with the Indians he met out West than with the native-born White Americans whose prejudice had forced him and his family to flee New York City during World War I. His involvement in the Harlem Renaissance of the mid-1920s had allowed Reiss not only to help construct a new image of African Americans in his portraits, but also to go a step further and become a creator of a new American visual aesthetic based on African American cultural forms. As a German immigrant, Reiss occupied a social position between native-born White Americans and the peoples of color he depicted in his artwork. By devoting himself as an artist to the accurate representation of the Native American and the African American, Reiss gave his artistic career a sense of purpose that it would not have had without it. By the 1930s, Reiss was ready to take another step, and that came in his marvelous renderings of White working class Americans in the Cincinnati Terminal. Clearly, these were the highlights of his Cincinnati mosaic, for their energy, liveliness, and devotion to work symbolized Reiss’s own manner of coping with adversity. His representations of such workers signalled that he identified with the cause of working class liberty and pioneered the kind of imagery of the common working man that other artists would continue to explore later in the thirties in murals for the Works Progress Administration. Perhaps because Reiss did not view women as part of the history of American transportation or as part of the industrial working class culture of Cincinnati, Reiss did not include any women in his iconographic mosaic of American progress.

Not surprisingly, many of his White working class figures of his concourse models including the man standing on the left in “Machine Tools” (Figure #20) and the man dragging the sheet in “Steel Making” (Figure #21), have a strength, an intensity, and industriousness that seem German.
class figures in the Cincinnati mosaics had a Germanic appearance to them. In the concourse mosaics, the bare chested man on the left in “Foundries,” the man dragging the sheet in “Steel Making,” and the man standing on the left in “Machine Tools” have a strength, an intensity, and industriousness that seems German. Reiss was able to read himself and his people into this panoramic history of Cincinnati and America, and find in America’s workers the positive qualities that characterized him and his people. As he moved from identification with the American Indian to participation in the Black movement of the Harlem Renaissance, to embracing of the White working class, Reiss became an American himself. It is not simply a coincidence, it seems to me, that it was during his work on the Cincinnati Union Terminal mosaic history of America, that Reiss became, in 1932, an American citizen. The Cincinnati commission allowed him to combine all of his talents as an artist — from portraitist to abstract interior designer — in a single project. Even more important, it allowed him to complete the process of identification with America by combining in one stellar monument to Americanness all of the ethnic groups with whom he had identified. In this project, Reiss achieved both a professional integration as an artist and a personal integration as a German American that he had not achieved before.

4. See Preston A. Barba’s “Cooper in Germany,” Indiana University Studies 2, no. 21 (May 15, 1914):52-72 and Karl May’s Winnetou, translated by Michael Shaw (New York, 1977). For a more extensive dis-
5. Stewart, p. 22.
6. Stewart, pp. 28-32. See also the synopsis of lecture given by Winold Reiss before the Art Students League, "The Modern German Poster," that was published in Modern Art Collector (New York, 1915).
11. Martin Bauml Duberman, Paul Robeson: A Biography (New York, 1989), pp. 113-115. Duberman documents that Robeson was criticized by many Blacks for "lending his talent and popularity" to the play, Showboat, and for singing the lyrics to Ol Man River.
13. Martin Bauml Duberman, Paul Robeson: A Biography (New York, 1989), pp. 113-115. Duberman documents that Robeson was criticized by many Blacks for "lending his talent and popularity" to the play, Showboat, and for singing the lyrics to Ol Man River.
16. Ibid., pp. 57-62.
22. Documents in the possession of Tjark and Renate Reiss show March 14, 1932 as the date of Winold Reiss's naturalization.

Illustrations

Figure #1. Turtle (born 1877) Version I. Crayon on paper, 19 3/4 x 14 1/2 in., 1919 Bradford Brinton Memorial Museum.

Figure #2. Lazy Boy in Medicine Robes (1855-1948). Version I Pastel and tempera on board, 44 x 30 1/2 in., 1927 Department of Anthropology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Photo by Smithsonian Staff photographer.

Figure #3. Angry Bull or Turtle (born 1877). Pastel, charcoal, and tempera on paper, 39 x 26 in., circa 1943 Burlington Northern Railroad, Fort Worth, Texas.

Figure #4. Shot Both Sides (1877-1956) Version II. Oil on canvas, 80 x 36 in., 1927 The Anschutz Collection, Denver, Colorado.

Figure #5. Pete After Buffalo and Night Shoot. Oil on canvas, 79 x 36 in., 1927 The Anschutz Collection, Denver, Colorado.

Figure #6. Bob Riding Black Horse. Oil on canvas, 80 x 36 in., 1927...
Figure #13. Section of Cincinnati Union Terminal Rotunda. Gregory Thorp Collection, Cincinnati Historical Society.

Figure #14. Chemicals and Drugs, The William S. Merrell Company source photo. Gregory Thorp Collection, Cincinnati Historical Society.

Figure #15. Chemicals and Drugs, concourse mosaic. Gregory Thorp Collection, Cincinnati Historical Society.

Figure #16. Photograph of Black Man leaning on shovel. Gregory Thorp Collection, Cincinnati Historical Society.

Figure #17. Portrait of a Man (4). Pastel on board, 20 x 15 in. Private Collection.

Figure #18. C.M. Waite, Chief Engineer, Cincinnati Union Station — Study for Cincinnati Union Terminal Mural. Pastel on board, 30 x 22 in., circa 1931-1933 Private Collection.

Figure #19. Railroad Worker — Study for Cincinnati Union Terminal Mural. Conte crayon on board, 30 x 22 in., circa 1931-1933 Collection of the Wolfsonian Foundation, Miami, Florida.


Figure #21. Steel Making, The Andrews Steel Company concourse mosaic. Gregory Thorp Collection, Cincinnati Historical Society.

Figure #22. Winold Reiss (1886-1953) circa 1930s unlocated.