Index of American Design

1936-1942
Descriptive Summary

Title: Index of American Design

Dates: 1936-1942

Collection Number: GC 1157

Creator/Collector:

Extent: (Boxes: 4 legal; 6 ov; slides binders)

Repository: Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

Abstract: Photographs and renderings from a Work Projects Administration (WPA) Art Project of California historical material, both decorative and utilitarian objects (particularly from various California missions), including furniture, architecture, metal and leatherwork, paintings and costume.

Language of Material: English

Access
Research is by appointment only

Publication Rights
Permission to publish, quote or reproduce must be secured from the repository and the copyright holder

Preferred Citation
Index of American Design. Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

Biography/Administrative History
The WPA Art Project of Southern California was located at 1845 So. Western Avenue, Los Angeles, Calif. The following information is cited from the National Gallery of Art website (http://www.nga.gov/collection/iad/index.shtm): The Index of American Design is a compilation of nearly 18,000 watercolor renderings that depict traditional American arts and crafts made before about 1890. The renderings were created under the auspices of the Index of American Design project, one of several Fine Arts Divisions in the Federal Art Project (FAP) of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which operated from 1935 to 1942. The renderings, now in the collection of the National Gallery of Art, were intended to create a pictorial survey of the rise and development of American design. They provide an unparalleled record of the material culture of the United States and the effort to document a unique national style. The first steps leading to the creation of the Index of American Design were taken in 1935 when Romana Javitz, head of the New York Public Library Picture Collection, and her colleague, New York artist Ruth Reeves, a textile designer and painter, developed the concept for a project to create a comprehensive visual resource of traditional American design. In August 1935, Reeves presented this idea to the national staff of the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Art Project in Washington, D.C. A pilot Index of American Design project was begun in New York City after this initial discussion. The Index was organized as a nationwide project in December 1935.

Scope and Content of Collection
Photographs and renderings from a Work Projects Administration (WPA) Art Project of California historical material, both decorative and utilitarian objects (particularly from various California missions), including furniture, architecture, metal and leatherwork, paintings and costume. Bulk of the collection are renderings such as watercolor and charcoal pencil. Also a collection of color slides taken of renderings. Legal boxes contains Data Report Sheets. 1936 - ca. 1942, undated. See also P-124 for photographs of paintings of the Stations of the Cross, San Gabriel Mission.

Indexing Terms
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