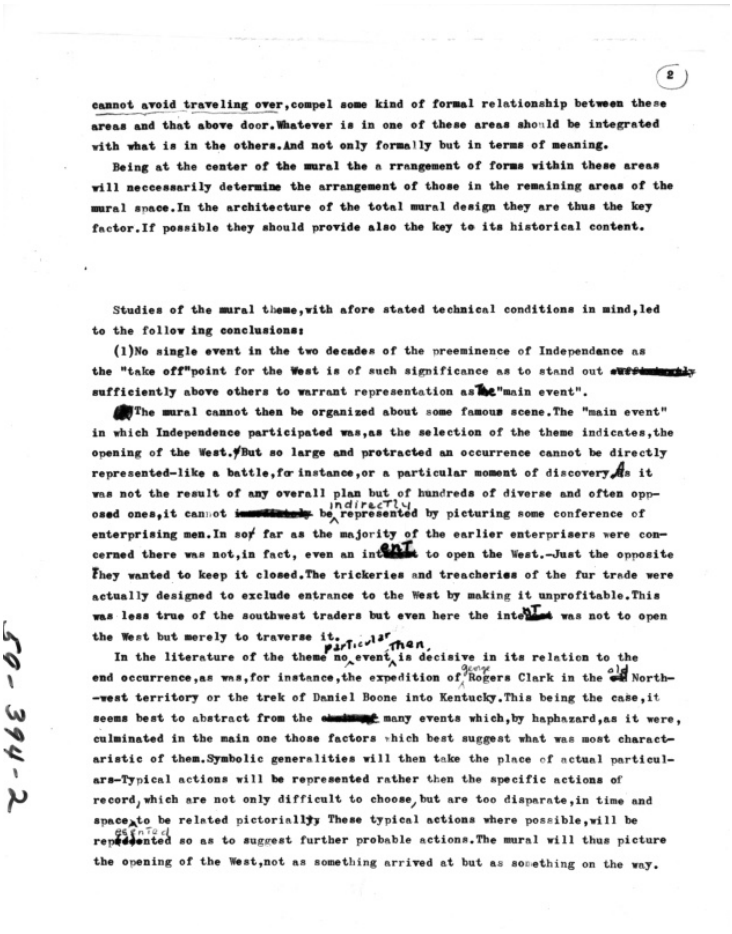
Copy of Thomas Hart Benton papers



(2)

cannot avoid traveling over,compel some kind of formal relationship between these areas and that above door.Whatever is in one of these areas should be integrated with what is in the others.And not only formally but in terms of meaning.

Being at the center of the mural the a rrangement of forms within these areas will neccessarily determine the arrangement of those in the remaining areas of the mural space.In the architecture of the total mural design they are thus the key factor.If possible they should provide also the key to its historical content.

Studies of the mural theme,with afore stated technical conditions in mind,led to the follow ing conclusions:

(1)No single event in the two decades of the preeminence of Independance as the "take off"point for the West is of such significance as to stand out sufficiently above others to warrant representation as the "main event".

The mural cannot then be organized about some famous scene.The "main event" in which Independence participated was,as the selection of the theme indicates,the opening of the West.But so large and protracted an occurrence cannot be directly represented-like a battle,for instance,or a particular moment of discovery.As it was not the result of any overall plan but of hundreds of diverse and often opposed ones,it cannot be indirectly represented by picturing some conference of enterprising men.In so far as the majority of the earlier enterprisers were concerned there was not,in fact, even an int[illegible] to open the West.-Just the opposite they wanted to keep it closed.The trickeries and treacheries of the fur trade were actually designed to exclude entrance to the West by making it unprofitable.This was less true of the southwest traders but even here the int[illegible] was not to open the West but merely to traverse it.

In the literature of the theme no particular event is decisive in its relation to the end occurrence,as was,for instance,the expedition of George Rogers Clark in the old North--west territory or the trek of Daniel Boone into Kentucky.This being the case,it seems best to abstract from the many events which,by haphazard,as it were, culminated in the main one those factors which best suggest what was most characteristic of them.Symbolic generalities will then take the place of actual particulars-Typical actions will be represented rather then the specific actions of record, which are not only difficult to choose, but are too disparate,in time and space,to be related pictorially. These typical actions where possible,will be represented so as to suggest further probable actions.The mural will thus picture the opening of the West,not as something arrived at but as something on the way.

59-394-2

Description
Copy of a page from the Thomas Hart Benton papers on the proposed mural for the Harry S. Truman Library.

Date(s)
November 5, 1958

Accession Number 59-394-2

8x10 inches (21x26 cm) Black & White

Keywords Artists Mural painting and decoration

HST Keywords Benton, Thomas Hart - Mural - Ref. to; Document

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