

Historic WPA Mural installed in JRL

“School Activities,” one of seven murals painted by James Daugherty (1887-1974) for the Works Project Administration’s (WPA) art projects, was installed in the Jeremy Richard Library. The seven murals, covering over 1000 feet, were commissioned in 1934 during the New Deal era for an octagonal music room at Stamford High School. In 1970, workmen removed them for a renovation and put them on top of a heap of construction materials in a dumpster, where they were rescued by a student. Though they had been cut into 30 pieces, six of the murals were reconstructed by an art restorer who sold two of them. The City of Stamford bought back four of them with funds from the State of Connecticut, the Ruth W. Brown Foundation, and other contributors.

James Daugherty played a role as an important mural artist in America, painting murals in schools, government buildings, and public housing. He also became an author and his draftsman skills served him well as he illustrated and/or authored over 100 books. In 1940, he was awarded the John Newbery Medal for his *Daniel Boone*, the year’s most distinguished contribution to American literature for children. He returned to abstract painting in 1953 and his works can be found in the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Yale University Art Gallery, Hirshorn Museum, and many other public and private collections.

“School Activities,” visible for the first time in 35 years, is on loan to UConn Stamford from the City of Stamford. Conservator Joseph Matteis, Jr. completed its further restoration and mounting on a portable backing in 2005. Funding for this purpose was generously provided by Reba and Dave Williams of Greenwich.

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