

at the National Museum of American History). This approach is problematic because, although Shank provides some deep analyses of issues such as the historical linkage of Christmas cards to visiting cards (used by middle- and upper-middle-class families) and tourist postcards, he sidesteps the ways corporations manufactured and managed emotions, which he claims is a focus of the book. Instead, he offers histories of chromolithography and technical aspects of greeting cards and of how popular culture communicated classist portrayals of emotional management. Nevertheless, the author provides a thorough analysis of how racial and classist images in greeting cards reinforced class distinctions and socioeconomic boundaries. Specifically, his careful and creative chronology of the use of blackface cards by both the white and the black middle classes in the early 1900s is admirable.

In short, this well-written and nicely illustrated book illuminates how the imagery in greeting cards has reflected overt and covert classist assumptions among greeting cards and, more generally, in the United States. Nonetheless, its reliance on archival card collections rather than on oral histories of consumers or on internal archives from greeting card corporations means that evidence for the deliberate manufacture and management of emotions in greeting cards is fairly tenuous.

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*Sky as Frontier: Adventure, Aviation, and Empire.* By David T. Courtwright. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005. x, 284 pp. Cloth, \$60.00, ISBN 1-58544-384-0. Paper, \$24.95, ISBN 1-58544-419-7.)

As the title suggests, David T. Courtwright casts this overview of the impact of flight on the United States as a frontier narrative. He notes that there is nothing new in the application of this metaphor to characterize the development of aviation. The use of such words as frontier, pioneer, and conquest have provided the foundation for everything from airline advertising to advocacy for an aggressive space program.

The author's approach, however, is more nuanced and imaginative, and it operates on several levels. He links the old and new frontiers by arguing the extent to which the expansion of the American nation across the continent created a need for long-distance air transport, encouraging improvements in flight technology and leading to American hegemony in the air by the late 1930s. Courtwright points to the work of the sociologist Murray Melbin, who discusses the new technology of artificial lighting in similar terms in his *Night as Frontier: Colonizing the World after Dark* (1987). Just so, the author notes, the conquest of the sky represented a frontier social environment equivalent to the ranching and mining communities of the American West, which were dominated by rootless young men who pursued dangerous work in a rough-and-ready society. He sums the matter up at the outset: "The first to venture onto that frontier had been mostly adventurous young men. Then came the rich and hurried. Then just about everybody" (p. ix).

Having established his frame of reference, Courtwright proceeds to trace aspects of the history of American aviation that illustrate the gradual domestication and democratization of what had once seemed a wildly dangerous enterprise. The emphasis is on the aviators who tamed the sky, from the aerial daredevils of the stick-and-wire era, through Charles Lindbergh and others of his generation who demonstrated the potential of aviation to bridge oceans and link continents, to the neatly trimmed and outfitted corporate representatives who go to work each day in the cockpits of modern airliners.

The author notes that aviation symbolized the increasing pace of change in the twentieth century and the extent to which national prestige became linked to success in air and space. While his primary focus is on the transformation of flight from a dangerous adventure into a prosaic everyday experience for millions of ordinary citizens, he points to the continuing tension between commerce and adventure. Even though the airlines emphasize safety, efficiency, and on-time service, the image of the intrepid, risk-taking aerospace frontiersman is by no means a thing of the past. Military aviators, test pilots, and astronauts continue

to face danger with the steady nerves and cool competence that defines the right stuff.

*Sky as Frontier* offers a fresh and interesting interpretation of the role of aviation in American culture, solidly rooted in both original and secondary sources. The illustrations work especially well with the text. The book offers much food for thought, not only for historians of flight but also for students of broader issues in American History.

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*For the Millions: American Art and Culture between the Wars.* By A. Joan Saab. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. 227 pp. \$35.00, ISBN 0-8122-3818-4.)

Changing concepts of modernity and democratic access transformed Americans' beliefs about the social roles of visual art during the interwar decades. A. Joan Saab's intriguing book demonstrates that diligent primary source research and innovative reassessment of institutional activities can contribute important new concepts to this topic, already widely discussed in American art-historical scholarship.

Two theses focus Saab's study. She argues, first, that the Federal Art Project (1935–1943), the New York Museum of Modern Art (founded in 1929), the organizers of the 1939–1940 New York World's Fair, and *Life* magazine in the late 1940s each instituted a distinctive pedagogical strategy to present visual art to a broad public audience as a modern form of cultural expression linked to democratic ideals. Second, she also interrogates the ways in which these competing projects contributed first to what she calls the desacralization of contemporary art during the 1930s and then to its resacralization in the postwar era. Her research has unearthed fascinating new material from archival and published sources, and she enlivens her argument with individual voices by drawing on a wide range of contemporary critical reviews, speeches, radio texts, and essays.

Saab articulately demonstrates how each institution sought to encourage American art en-

thusiasts, museum goers, or world's fair visitors to reconceptualize art production and art consumption as equally compelling, democratically engaged activities while also conveying the tensions within each institution's propagandistic efforts to define art's democratic functions. For example, Holger Cahill, director of the Federal Art Project, was deeply influenced by John Dewey's vision of participatory aesthetic education and production, yet racial divisions caused uproar when African American artists insisted that images of black culture could be universally meaningful in the Harlem Hospital murals. The Museum of Modern Art, inspired by its director, Alfred H. Barr Jr., introduced industrial design exhibitions in the 1930s that sought to balance a pedagogy of certified aesthetic value with enthusiasm for new modernist styles, but some critics opposed the merging of commercial and fine art values. At the New York World's Fair, efforts to pose the fair itself as an aesthetic experience and to valorize the mass consumption of stylish commercial products as aesthetic commodities were also contested by critics who insisted that fine art must have separate representation from consumer culture. In the postwar era, Saab uses *Life* magazine's October 11, 1948, "Round Table on Modern Art" to investigate the dilemma posed by three competing aesthetic ideologies: valorizations of freedom of expression, reaffirmations of art's elite status, and efforts to make even the most difficult modernist work accessible to an educated public through pedagogical expertise.

Saab's study makes an important contribution to scholarship on 1930s visual culture through its carefully considered investigation of each institution's distinctive strategy for promoting visual art in a democratic society. Her analysis is exemplary in contrasting differently nuanced positions in each case study context, as she traces varied policy decisions and conflicting viewpoints, showing how these tensions were never resolved but allowed "myriad visions of art and democracy to co-exist" within American cultural discourse (p. 135).

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