

JoAnne Mancini

What interests me about the *Parnassus* moment is not so much its resonance with our own era, but its dissonance from it. To be sure, a pervasive sense of global crisis links us to 1940, when war engulfed much of the world. But, as Kroiz's analysis reminds us, Americans at that time—at least, the vast majority of Americans who were able to ignore their own history of militarism, empire, and racism, and frame national achievements as highlights in human development instead—viewed such crisis from a position of exceptionalism and even hubris. Thus Longman, with the best of intentions, could promote a kind of Deweyan producerism as an antidote to the imagined possibility that European fascism would take hold in America.

I am sure that I am not alone in supporting aspects of Longman's project—particularly his commitment to making. As I have argued elsewhere, I believe that the making of art is a human capability that should always and universally be facilitated. Further, I would add that as art-world art moves further away from facture (and hence becomes less and less a part of quotidian culture), art history that tells us about other times and places and ways of doing things will play an increasingly important role. But I would not want to ride the blinkered high-horse of emergent Cold-War enthusiasm that carried Longman to his embrace of facture. And I would suspect that, three-quarters of a century after the collapse of *Parnassus*, the kind of antinomian magic that underpinned his position—the idea that the fostering of individual “American” creativity would prevent “European” violence against people and culture—has lost its appeal for many others, as well. After all, most historians of American art who do take an interest in what we might call “citizenship” are more likely to spend their time looking into the dark heart of America than worrying about the risks of imported ideologies. And they are just as likely to focus on the ways that art has hindered as facilitated the good. The question I would ask, then, is what a post-exceptionalist *Parnassus* might look like.