

# PAUL CADMUS

b. December 17, 1904

d. December 12, 1999

## ARTIST

*"It wasn't much of a problem being gay, but one was secretive. You could get into trouble."*

**"People say my paintings are not right for the times. Can I help it if the times are wrong?"**

Paul Cadmus was one of the first openly gay artists. He is best known for his homoerotic paintings and drawings of nude male figures.

Cadmus was born in New York City in what he called "a horrible tenement." His father was a commercial artist and his mother illustrated children's books. Cadmus dropped out of high school to enroll at the National Academy of Design, where he spent six years as an outstanding student. After two years at the Arts Student League of New York City, he worked as an illustrator in publishing and advertising.

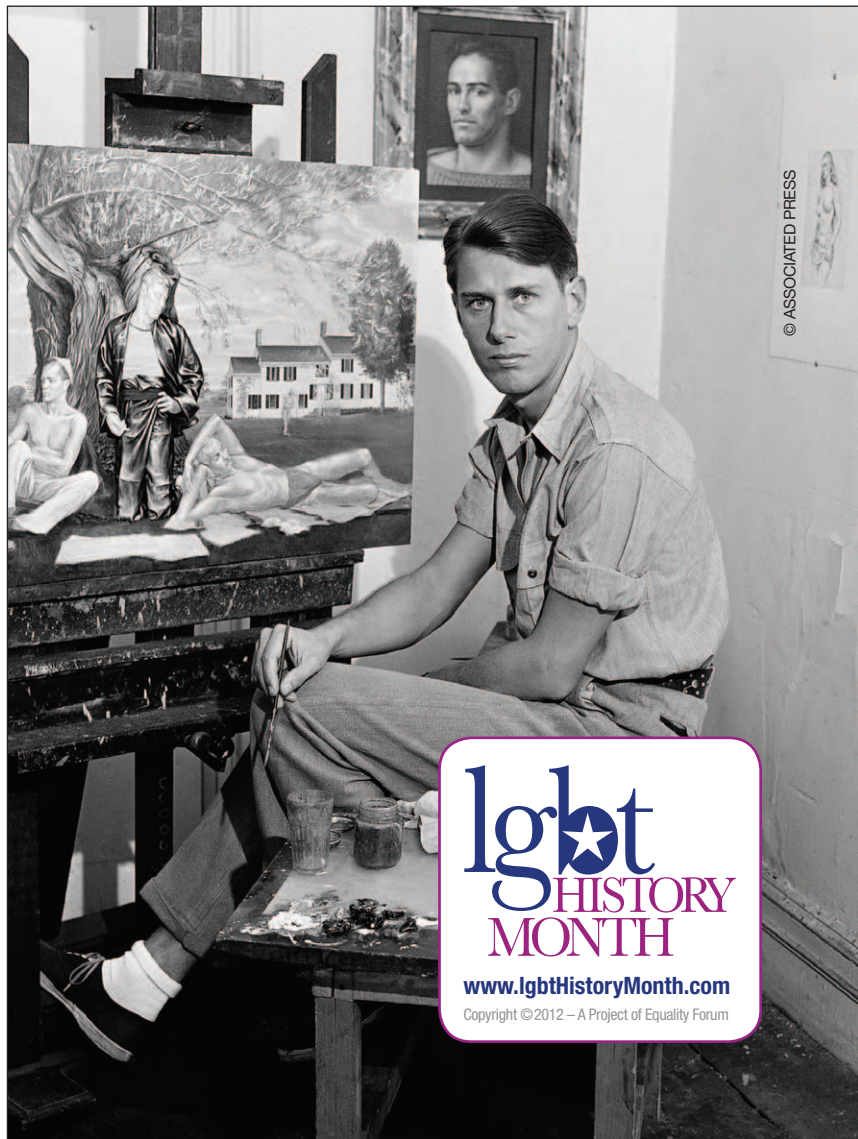
In the 1930's, Cadmus worked for the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), a post-Depression government project. He created paintings for a planned PWAP exhibit at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. One of these works, "The Fleet's In," is a provocative depiction of U.S. Navy personnel carousing with women dressed like prostitutes. It includes a subtle homoerotic image of a sailor flirting with a civilian man. The painting generated controversy, causing the Navy to remove it from the exhibition.

The scandal brought the artist national attention. His subsequent work continued to push the envelope with naked and muscled male physiques. Cadmus became recognized as one of the first contemporary artists to chronicle gay life. Despite his success, museums rejected his work because of its gay themes.

In an interview with the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art, Cadmus quoted the French artist Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres: "People say my paintings are not right for the times. Can I help it if the times are wrong?" Now in the permanent collection of The Navy Art Gallery in Washington, "The Fleet's In" is among the most popular attractions.

In 1999, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Equality Forum honored Cadmus with the International Arts Award. He called it his most prized award and the first time the gay community officially acknowledged his contribution.

Cadmus had a 35-year relationship with Jon Andersson, the subject of many of his works.



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