AMERICAN TRAGEDY
A 20th Century Portrait of Life in the United States
by Ralph Fasanella
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Ralph Fasanella: History Painter
Essay by Janet Zandy

I thought I was a smart guy until I started painting, and then I found out what
I didn’t know. You think you’re a smart guy because you’re in politics and you know all the answers;
but when I got into painting it became a different ball game. You start to look at things in all
different ways. You know? What is color? What is sound? What is material? What is this?
What is that? And that doesn’t end, you know? Because once you get involved in painting, well . . .
a painting’s no end, it’s a beginning. It begins like life.¹

Ralph Fasanella got involved with painting when he was about thirty years old. His word choice,
“involved,” is the patois of a working-class New York City guy. He does not say, “I became an artist.”
Instead, he sees painting (on canvas, not walls) as work. Since he was not from a lineage of educated
esthetes, never mind trained artists, he had to make a leap. He had to give himself permission to steal
time from wage labor to make art. But this involvement was different from his stint in Spain as a transport
driver and soldier in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War (1937-38) or his years as a
union organizer (1941-46), or his many factory jobs, not to mention his child labor helping his father
deliver ice, or his tough survival through three Catholic reform school incarcerations. The force that drove
Ralph Fasanella to produce hundreds of paintings for over fifty years was a different kind of hunger. He understood that if he didn’t respond to this force—call it creative genius, call it political consciousness, call it repairing the world—he would sink.

Although his formal schooling ended in the eighth grade, Ralph Fasanella was a lifelong, self-taught, inquiring, intellectual. View Ralph Fasanella’s intellectuality from an Antonio Gramsci perspective. Certainly well acquainted with tedious labor, Fasanella also recognized, as Gramsci articulated, that brain work and hand work are inseparable. Fasanella’s disdain for “fucking head men” is not a dismissal of thought; rather, it is a recognition of a broader knowledge base. Gramsci defined the “mode of being of the new intellectual” as moving beyond eloquence and oration, and becoming an active participant “in practical life, as constructor, organizer, [and] permanent persuader.” Fasanella was grounded in the epistemology (ways of knowing) and geography of working-class lives. He painted and knew the physicality of labor—the weight of blocked ice on a man’s shoulders, the burden of repetitive stitching on a woman’s hands. A Gramscian intellectual, organic, not functionary, he devised ways of carrying home, family, and community aspirations and inspirations out and into a wider world. His “Lest We Forget” is not easy nostalgia. His work is about connection, agency, praxis, and liberation.

Well-intentioned art historians, curators, and writers attempt to categorize Ralph Fasanella as ‘primitive,’ or ‘urban exotic.’ *Sui generis*, perhaps, he does not fit easily into anyone’s preconceived categories.
Self-taught,’ or ‘communally taught,’ are likely more appropriate (and less class tainted) descriptions. How then to place Fasanella within the history of art? Although he painted landscapes and portraits, Fasanella’s powerful legacy rests with his historically and politically articulate paintings. Why not, then, situate Ralph Fasanella in the tradition of history painting and show how he reinvented it? He may be viewed as an outsider by the bourgeois art historical establishment, but his practice is one who is inside a long lineage of narrative and history-centric art making. Fasanella painted confluence, intersection, and, especially, struggle for human liberation against military, political, and economic domination. These are not simple binaries; they are interconnected loops. In Ralph Fasanella’s cosmology, labor history is inseparable from his art history.

Fasanella’s canvases encompass: assassinations (Kennedy brothers, Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers, Malcolm X); shootings (Kent State, Jackson State); killings of Civil Rights activists (Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner); executions (Ethel and Julius Rosenberg); political shifts (McCarthyism, Atomic Age, the 60s); newspaper headlines (Pope Paul VI visit, Daily News strike); advertisements to consume and save; demonstrations (Vietnam, Civil Rights); names to remember (Lincoln, Paine, FDR, Frederick Douglass, Eugene V. Debs, John Lewis); coffins; books; baseball (‘Agnew out, Mets in’)(sandlots and stadiums); cityscapes; utopian suburbs (faux arcadia?); factory work; apartment and street life; love goddesses; and churches. That’s a short list. His inclusive capacity demonstrated how politics is not out there—atomized and separate from daily life—but rather looms as a shaping force affecting people’s lives, especially the
working classes. His people appear diminutive in the large canvases, but on closer look, notice the subtle ways their bodies speak. Fasanella’s figures are not generic peasants drawn to amuse the owning classes. They may line up, march, demonstrate, parade, and observe, but they never devolve into a mob—although police, often on white horses, threaten at close range.

Ralph Fasanella was a citizen-painter. He found a perfect match for his democratically shaped artistic vision in the 1912 “Bread and Roses, Too” strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts. He arrived in Lawrence in October 1975 and lived monastically and periodically at the YMCA over the next four years. He absorbed the city, evoked the memories of its working-class people, studied the mill architecture, learned the intricacy of cloth producing machinery, and found his epic subject through preliminary drawings, street paintings, and then, major canvases: Lawrence 1912–The Bread and Roses Strike, 1977 and The Great Strike (IWW Textile Strike), 1978. He approached his study like a union organizer: I began to walk around town. I built a kind of route, stations of my own. I knew my landmarks. I was beginning to absorb the streets and buildings. At all different hours, all different shifts, all different times. Sunny days, cold days, moody days. . . . I would walk into the buildings by myself. I knew how to skip the guards, factory bosses. I could always find a way of walking very naturally to get into the buildings. . . . I never left the area of about five square blocks away from the mills.  

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“I never left” sums up not just his sojourn in Lawrence, but also Fasanella’s artistic and political trajectory. He never obfuscated America’s failure to live up to its democratic promises, nor did he abandon possibilities of democratic change through struggle. What distinguishes working-class art, and Fasanella’s body of work in particular, is its depiction of power relationships between the non-owning class and, as Richard Wright put it, “the Bosses of the Buildings and the Lords of the Land.”

Imagine a union organizing campaign with posters of Ralph Fasanella’s paintings displayed in the parking lots and entrances to the work site. Imagine a classroom lesson on Workers Memorial Day (April 28) focused on Fasanella’s workscapes. Imagine an emphasis not on markets, but on the efficacy of art making to rouse consciousness and invite engagement.

Ralph Fasanella recognized the human need for bread and for beauty. He was a solo artist with an immense, collective imagination and an unsatisfied thirst for justice.

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Notes


4. He not only carried history painting into the twentieth-century, he also invites fresh and daring art historical connections. Consider Ralph Fasanella in relation to William Blake’s intertextual cosmology and the modernity of Francisco Goya’s drawings.

5. Quoted in D’Ambrosio, 121. See also Marc Fasanella’s remembrance of trips to Lawrence with his father, “Unpacking the Mills,” in *Ralph Fasanella: Images of Optimism*, 82-89. See William

MAY DAY, 1948
Ralph Fasanella (1914-1997)
Oil on canvas
50” x 80”
From its earliest stages, Ralph Fasanella’s art can be seen as an attempt to reconcile traditional and progressive concerns, to mediate a dialogue between past and future. While he placed a high value on the sense of the working-class community that characterized the ethnic neighborhoods of Greenwich Village and the Bronx, Fasanella dedicated much of his life to expanding the consciousness of these communities beyond their narrow borders. In so doing, he found himself in league with people whom he felt had no roots in working-class life, and he felt an overwhelming sense of isolation and detachment from his own cultural heritage. This conflict caused the restlessness and anxiety that led to Fasanella’s first attempts to express himself creatively and shaped the dialogue between traditional culture and progressive politics—between memories of the past and visions of the future—that pervades the artist’s entire body of work.

Fasanella joyfully and nostalgically celebrates the values of memory and vision in one of his first major political paintings, May Day, executed in 1948. May Day represents Fasanella’s attempt to capture the scope and spirit of the protest movements of the 1930s, focusing upon the huge May Day parades that annually drew between 100,000 and 200,000 demonstrators to Union Square in New York City.

May Day is one of the first true mural-sized works with a broad historical scope that Fasanella attempted. The organic, sweeping lines, heavy impasto, vibrant colors, and uneven distribution of detail all convey the exuberance that marks Fasanella’s early work. It is both historical and visionary, part memory painting and part political manifesto, as it glorifies the unity and purpose inherent in any meaningful collective action.
On the left side of the painting, throngs of marchers, representing a variety of races and ethnic backgrounds, pour out of the crowded streets and tenements. They descend upon New York’s Union Square with large banners proclaiming their support for organized labor and racial unity under the overarching cause of "Peace, Democracy, Security." At the head of the parade is a magnificent horse-drawn float, complete with May Pole and women in ethnic costumes, representing the International Workers' Order. The IWO was widely known in the 1930s for its work with school children of immigrant backgrounds, particularly in the 130 or so elementary and high schools run by the organization. It is no accident that this group, which was committed to preparing a future generation for socialism, leads the march into the futuristic vision occupying the right half of the painting.

They do not enter the future, however, without recognizing and paying their respects to the past. At the center of the painting, the marchers pass a reviewing stand with a backdrop that serves as a shrine to labor heroes. The shrine is topped by four Americans (Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, and Franklin D. Roosevelt) and includes, below, legendary left-wing figures ranging from Karl Marx to Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

Across a colorful bed of flowers just beyond the head of the parade lies the artist’s utopian vision. It is a place of light and air where workers live in model housing and, liberated from the burden of twelve- and sixteen-hour shifts, pursue cultural and physical activities to improve their bodies, minds, and spirits. To understand this section of the painting it is essential to keep in mind the ideals of Labor’s eight-hour movement and its central role in the birth of May Day as a labor celebration in the 1880s. As a reminder, the artist included a final exhortation on the wall of the library at the upper right: “Read Fast: The American,” historical novelist Howard Fast’s story of the
1886 Chicago Haymarket Square Riot and the first May Day parade.²

Howard Fast’s 1990 memoir, Being Red, describes a massive parade of the type depicted in the painting:

And then it was May 1, 1946, and there had never been such a May Day for the left, not before then nor since. The veterans, recently discharged, wore their uniforms, thousands upon thousands of men and women in uniform, so many that the uniformed section of the parade marched like an Army Day parade, ranks of sailors, soldiers, marines, nurses. The group I was with, teachers, writers, artists, lawyers, and physicians, numbered over eleven thousand; and the number of paraders, as we counted them, was over 150,000, and when they packed Union Square, cheering left-wing and Communist leaders and speakers, one would have said that the future of the left in America was extremely bright. And of course, they would have been wrong.³

Although this painting captures the spirit and vision of the great May Day parades of the 1930s, Fasanella created it in an era that was much more hostile to left-wing social reform. By the late 1940s, the Cold War had fueled a new round of strident anti-communism, and disruptions and violence often marred May Day celebrations. Moreover, owing to his involvement with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and United Electrical, Fasanella was one of thousands of Americans that the US Government followed, harassed, and blacklisted. President Truman’s 1947 executive order requiring loyalty oaths of all civil servants had spread to virtually all areas of American society. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 required union leaders to take an oath that they
were not communists. Galleries like ACA were charged with being hotbeds of radicalism, and in 1949 the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) expelled its left-wing unions, including United Electrical.

As a trade unionist and an artist, Fasanella was profoundly affected by the anti-communist hysteria. He saw the unions as being taken over by right-wingers and racketeers, and the willingness to exhibit socially conscious art vanish. Fasanella fought the conservative tide by briefly returning to United Electrical to aid in their battle with the CIO and running for City Council on the American Labor Party ticket during the 1949 Mayoral campaign of the radical politician Vito Marcantonio.4

One development in Fasanella’s life in the late 1940s would have far-reaching consequences for his career (and survival) as an artist. Over the course of several years, Fasanella periodically dated Eva Lazorek, a young woman with working-class roots whom he had met in 1942 at Camp Unity, a summer camp run by the Trade Union Unity League. Though she first knew him as an organizer, Eva was fascinated by Fasanella’s ability to express his convictions in paint. She encountered his work when she noticed a large canvas leaning against a wall behind a water cooler at the Jefferson School, a left-wing school in New York. That painting was May Day. Ralph and Eva would often run into each other at the annual May Day parades and go out for a period of weeks or months, until it became evident that Fasanella’s compulsion to paint left him little time for a personal relationship.

This pattern continued until 1950, when, as Eva explains, “it was announced that there wouldn’t be any more May Day parades, so we decided to get married. Actually, he was the most fascinating person I had ever met, and subconsciously I wanted to be a part of the creative explosion which
I sensed was fermenting within him. That’s what made me change my mind.”⁵ Eva wisely got her teaching degree first, for in the coming years, her ability to hold a job and maintain a stable home allowed Ralph to continue to be creative despite being repeatedly fired from a series of factory jobs for reasons that were never adequately explained.

In the course of his transition from labor activist to social artist, Fasanella naturally retained and refined the basic principles that had guided his activities for years. His ability to communicate with working people, distilled from years of trying to awaken the consciousness of the working class, formed the foundation of Fasanella’s artistic philosophy.

Fasanella’s artistic career, despite the early positive reception, was ultimately curtailed by the political climate of the early Cold War, which forced him to paint in relative obscurity for the next quarter century. His experience in the late 1940s, however, left no doubt in his own mind that he was creating images of compelling beauty and deep meaning. This knowledge, along with the critical support of his wife, sustained Fasanella in the dark years that followed. When he reemerged in the early 1970s and was justly celebrated as an important American artist, Fasanella had a quarter century’s worth of intense, compelling artwork to share. May Day represents the first flowering of these social and artistic ambitions.
Notes

1. The IWO was widely known in the 1930s for its work with school children of immigrant backgrounds, particularly in the 130 or so elementary and high schools the organization ran. It is no accident that this group, which was committed to preparing a future generation for Socialism, leads the march into the futuristic vision occupying the right half of the painting.

2. Howard Fast’s novel *The American: A Middle Western Legend* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946) tells the story of John Peter Altgeld, Governor of Illinois who pardoned the surviving convicted Haymarket anarchists several years after four of their number were executed by order of his predecessor.


4. Watson, Fasanella’s City, 103-108. Fasanella’s admiration for Marcantonio as a compassionate, incorruptible fighter for progressive values is well documented in Fasanella’s City. Born into a working-class, immigrant family in East Harlem, Marcantonio became a seven-term Congressman who was a national spokesperson for the left and a chief defender of the activities of the Communist Party. His electoral successes make him unique among radical politicians. See Gerald Meyer, *Vito Marcantonio: Radical Politician, 1902-1954* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

GREY DAY, 1963
Ralph Fasanella (1914-1997)
Oil on canvas
42” x 72”
A Dark Sky

Essay by Marc Fasanella

I grew up with a profound awareness of the cloud of indifference that hovers over the fate of the human race. The knowledge that government can act despotically, rally public opinion to support its abuses, and that much of what is done in the name of justice are acts of injustice committed to maintain a status-quo weighs upon me. It disturbs my sleep that collective empathy is a difficult thing to enlist, that history has a tendency to repeat itself and that the human community cannot be counted on to act with humility, reverence for the sanctity of life or a clear view of our ethical responsibilities to each-other.

My parents were radicals and raised me to think radically. Not for the sake of being radical in and of itself but as a means to move our collective consciousness, all of humanity, toward a more just, more egalitarian existence. A friend of mine once remarked there are two things people detest: the way things are— and change. That flaw in our species: an inability to see the way forward while reflecting upon our past has done us much harm. When they were young my parents were quite outspoken in and activist regarding their beliefs. My father volunteered with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, went to Spain to put his life on the line in support of a democratically elected socialist government that was ousted in a military coup. When he returned home, he was declared a premature anti-fascist, put on a watch-list and blacklisted during the McCarthy era. A filmmaker requested his FBI file, and that file is a testament to the paranoia of the age. He was followed, his prospective employers warned of his political leanings, but the worst crime that he committed during that time was to have an occasional gathering of like-minded progressives, complete with jazz music, bottles of wine and beer – a party, deemed worthy of investigation. My mother was for a
short time a member of the American Negro Theater and dated a “black man”, that was enough to have her spat upon in public. My parents met and dated briefly and after several years of rekindling the relationship each time they met each other at an annual May Day parade in New York City’s Union Square, they finally decided to give a real relationship a go and got married in 1950.

The trial of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg that began the following year weighed heavily on their minds. Since my parents were progressives in the 1940’s it was natural that their circle of friends included anarchists, civil rights workers, communists and socialists amongst whom there were many Jewish intellectuals. Anti-Semitism was a painful reality of American life during and after the second World-War and my parents were drawn into a community of peers who watched with horror as Julius and Ethel were put on trial for espionage and executed for passing secret information on atomic weaponry to the Soviet Union. The trial was fraught with falsehoods and inconsistencies and Ethel, who was raised in the same neighborhood as my mother, would be posthumously exonerated, fifty years after her execution. The pall the Rosenberg trial cast on everyday life began in 1951 but was brought to a climax by their 1953 public electrocution. The death of the Rosenberg’s was a profound emotional burden for my parents. They wept openly about it for many years afterward. For progressives of that era to see people who believed in democratic ideals, Civil Rights, equal pay for equal work, their spiritual and intellectual brethren, young, self-made progressive intellectuals on trial, excoriated as un-American, debased, communist, Jews - was frightening. The Rosenberg’s trial was a highly politicized enterprise, a form of political theater meant to silence dissent, the proceedings and their outcome had its intended chilling effect. After the Rosenbergs’ execution activists of my parent’s generation were afraid to discuss their politics unless amongst the closest of friends. I grew up knowing that my parents had been members of the widely popular Young Communist League, that my father and many others had been blacklisted, and that a grave injustice was publicly done to the Rosenbergs and their two young sons, but these were events that only a small circle
remembered. I looked for the story, but it was excluded from school history books, relegated to a past that many thought irrelevant to the society that unfolded in the wake of the execution.

The Rosenberg’s Grey Day painting hung in several locations in my parent’s home while I was growing up. Over the years I looked at it, pondered its dark meaning and felt the shadow of its moonlit sky in my own life. At the center of the canvas Ethel and Julius sit upon an electric chair, cum altar, composed of stained glass. Between their heads a candelabra adorned with the letters W.H.S. spell out an epitaph for them “We Have Sons.” To their left in the domestic scene of the Rosenberg home, sitting upon a bed, reading a book, sits their eldest son Michael in a room lined with books, records, and a record player. To their right in the kitchen and dining area of the Rosenberg apartment their young son Robert plays upon a hobby-horse unaware of the drama that is to become the central tenet of his adult life. At the Rosenberg’s feet is a pile of banned books waiting to be set alight and engulf them in flames. Above Julius and Ethel, outside the doors of a federal courthouse, stand the victors of the show trial at which the Rosenbergs were convicted. Depicted are jaunty well-dressed government officials and prosecution lawyers, who represent the triumphant military-industrial complex prophetically warned against by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1961, just ten years after charges were brought against the Rosebergs but two years before the completion of the painting. Eisenhower had been given a chance to spare the couple’s life before their execution in 1953 but had not deigned to do so.

To the left of the courthouse doors hangs a reporter clinging to scaffolding, in an effort to get a better photograph, he climbs a central iron truss covered in an Africanized stained-glass motif. At the base of the truss, in cells of solitary confinement, sits Julius at the left, Ethel to the right, between them the grey cells of other desolate inmates of Sing-Sing prison awaiting execution. At the apex of the truss is an atom bomb capped by a third eye, flanked by gruesome distorted wings and crowned by a devil’s mask that
expands outward into a headdress of atomic power. The truss in its entirety forms a scarlet “A” for Atomic, representing the might of the military-industrial complex in spiritual form. To the left of the truss are the darkened city streets of the working and middle class supporters of the Rosenbergs. The sad end of the long vigil held to protest the Rosenberg’s execution is portrayed in the street. At the foreground supporters weep, overcome with grief, as a small throng of demoralized mourners who have their backs turned to us make their way homeward. Atop an empty platform upon which no more speeches can be given, sits a lonely figure, there is nothing left to be said. Above the mourners, women, black, white and Latino toil in a garment factory, the packing and shipping room closest to the Rosenbergs themselves is a representation of the workers for whom Ethel worked as a union organizer. To the right of the atomic truss, at the base of the painting protesters picket in an effort to save the lives of the Rosenbergs. They march before a disinterested, decadent scene of uninformed, debauched wealth and privilege oblivious or unconcerned for the lives their very existence holds in the balance. The cocktail party plays out in a grassy courtyard just outside the Spartan courtroom where the presiding Judge Irving Kaufman deciding Julius and Ethel’s fate is depicted as blind.

When I began to develop my intellectual identity in high school the painting Grey Day loomed large in my consciousness. Around 1980 my classmates started muttering slogans such as “Nuke Iran” and I immediately recognized the closed-mindedness my parents experienced in their day. The dismissal of the entire population of a nation as deviant and worthy of being executed without a thought to their existence as fellow human beings profoundly disturbed me. Though our nation had gone through the progressive eras of the 1960’s and 70’s it seemed to me we were slipping back into a period of cultural despotism. A highly nationalistic notion of one way, the right way, to think, seemed to pervade the pronouncements of my peers. A collective sense of “my country right or wrong” dominated any discussion of international affairs. “They hate us” became a slogan and form of propaganda that seemed to me an obvious
admission of what my community was really saying “We hate them.” It was clear that my contempo-
raries had made no effort to understand Iranians or any other culture for that matter. My typical public
schooling had presented me with little awareness of the history of other nations, the cultural beliefs of
other societies, unless we studied groups of tribal people as relics of another epoch. It seemed to me
that America, or what little my companions knew of it, ended at the borders of the United States, outside
those borders were only people who wanted what we had. Canada, Mexico and the rest of the bountiful
landmass of the American continent down to its southern tip, are seen as remote and unrelated lands.
The role our government plays in the economies of other nations was not something to be considered or
discussed.

Through my parents’ social network, I had come to know wonderful people who were raised outside the
confines mainstream North American socialization, intellectual Iranians, Germans, Canadians, Mexicans,
and many others who seemed more well-informed regarding world politics and better able to judge
world conflicts then my countrymen. Amongst my friends and colleagues, I felt the shadow of the
McCarthy era and the blanket dismissal of progressive ideas as un-American. This weighed upon me and
I became reluctant to let others know of my parents’ egalitarian political beliefs. I worried that somehow
it would affect my success in life, my career, that I would be judged negatively for my father’s premature
anti-fascism, my parents’ belief in civil rights, pay equity, and an egalitarian society based on the
treatment of all human beings as equal members of a collective human community. Though I had great
pride in my parents’ beliefs and identified with the struggles they participated in, as I entered my career
I was purposeful about not bringing my father’s work to people’s attention and often kept my beliefs to
myself unless confronted with outright bigotry. So, while the legacy of my father’s work is ultimately one of
hopefulness and portrays a vision of a more egalitarian time, the legacy of intellectual suppression that is
part of the American past is also an important part of his message.
As we enter the twenty-first century and the confrontations that a truly international human community presents, I am reminded of the darkness we as a people are capable of. Regardless of the circumstances associated with Julius and Ethel’s rise to ignominy, how quick we were to make a national spectacle of them and execute a young couple with two young sons on the threshold of their lives. How little understanding we have of our foes as fellow human beings, how little real dialog we engage in or empathy we extend. As Robert S. McNamara, the primary architect of the Vietnam War, pointed out in the Errol Morris documentary *The Fog of War* - our society ultimately fights to destroy a foe of its own making and often the lives of an entire people are caught in the balance.
AMERICAN TRAGEDY, 1964
Ralph Fasanella (1914-1997)
Oil on canvas
42” x 90”
Essay by Paul S. D’Ambrosio

In the early 1960s Ralph Fasanella’s artwork evolved into large, complex scenes drawing extensively on the media images that dominated the era. His style changed significantly; his brushwork became more controlled, his compositions better organized, his color schemes more varied and effective. More important, Fasanella’s subject matter extended well beyond the childhood memories and neighborhood scenes that dominated his work in the 1950s. In a decade characterized by expanding social consciousness, mass media, and heightened political activity, Fasanella’s work of the early 1960s illustrates a corresponding move toward larger issues and contemporary political and social commentary. This shift in content inspired by the civil rights movement—marked a reinvigorated voice of protest and a desire to comment on the destructive forces at work in American society. This change can best be seen in the quality of the paintings that emerged from Fasanella’s studio in the early years of the decade, the most important of which was American Tragedy.

The backdrop for Fasanella’s most radical art was the comfortable routine of Happy and Bud’s service station on 163rd Street in the Bronx, which he bought with two friends in the late 1950s. The main contradiction of the artist’s work in the early 1960s was that as his personal life became more settled and predictable, his art was transformed into intense and bitter commentary on the national scene. Whereas in the 1940s Fasanella was a participant in the world he portrayed, and in the 1950s he was a refugee, in the 1960s he became an astute yet detached observer. Later, in the 1970s and beyond, he would become a historian.

Happy and Bud’s service station required a great deal of Fasanella’s time and energy, and although it kept him from being very involved in social movements or political campaigns, it gave him stability. Fasanella
admitted that his activism fell off, and that he felt guilty at not being more involved in the civil rights struggle. Nonetheless, he felt a sense of accomplishment in his art, as he explained, “I was excited about painting. When I was working at Happy and Bud’s I was watching the world move about. I did a lot of paintings of the outside world. I was very much involved emotionally. I didn’t feel disconnected.”

Eva Fasanella recalled the gas station as having a significantly positive affect on her husband: “It put him in contact with people, and he needs people to survive. He was very much on an upswing when he was working there.”

American Tragedy was immediately preceded by Gray Day and McCarthy Period, which deal with the 1953 execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. These works incorporate a multitude of symbolic elements without being esoteric and obtuse, and they are visually arresting. In these paintings Fasanella reaches a mature style of visual social commentary by combining a solid overall composition with an effective composite of images related by subject matter if not by time and space. Within this framework, the artist infuses countless details drawn from New York street life to ground the viewer on familiar territory.

These works, though tailored to the masses, had virtually no audience outside of a small circle of friends and family. In 1988 the artist recalled “we never showed these paintings. It’s only in the last ten years that we pulled them out… We’d run upstairs and put them in the back, so no one was even looking at these paintings.” Fasanella had no showings of his work since the James Gallery exhibition in 1957 and felt strongly that critics and galleries ignored him because of the content of his paintings. During this time, Fasanella did approach a number of galleries, but without any results. He recalled:
They wouldn’t touch them [his paintings] with a ten-foot pole. “Oh, we can’t handle your work.” Finally, we decided not to go there anymore. Just left and kept painting. In fact, I decided one day I would loan my paintings out to people because we were going nowhere.⁴

Gray Day and McCarthy Period were Fasanella’s last major paintings on the subject of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. The fact that they were done ten years after the execution underscores Fasanella’s desire to preserve their memory as well as to communicate more effectively his thoughts and feelings.⁵ A comparison of the 1950s Rosenberg paintings, Garden Party and War Games, to Gray Day and McCarthy Period shows the later paintings to be more complex, well organized, and clear. Within months of the completion of these two 1963 paintings, a national tragedy compelled Fasanella to apply his artistic skills to more current events.

The assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas on November 22, 1963 left the nation in shock and grief. Like many Americans, Fasanella recalled exactly where he was and what he felt on hearing the news. Driving along a Pennsylvania highway when he heard the report on the radio, Fasanella immediately thought that some sort of right-wing coup was in the making.⁶ For a while he followed the investigation obsessively and read everything he could about the various theories that Oswald had not acted alone. He remembered, “A tremendous change came over me. I read everything. I came to the
conclusion that this guy was killed by somebody else—that Oswald was the mopey guy.” The subsequent deaths of Oswald, Jack Ruby, and other potential witnesses only deepened Fasanella’s suspicions.

The combined effect of two events provided the catalyst for Fasanella’s conception of a painting dealing with the Kennedy assassination. First, he went to see Cosmopolitan magazine’s exhibition of artwork inspired by the assassination. The works on display there, he felt, were superficial and said nothing about the underlying tensions in American society that formed the broader (and more disturbing) context to the tragedy. The second event was the nomination of Barry Goldwater as the Republican presidential candidate in 1964. In Goldwater, Fasanella saw the embodiment of the wealthy, powerful, and reactionary New South. This figure gave Fasanella the inspiration for the central drama of the painting he now felt compelled to create:

I walked along the street one day, and it snapped. I caught the painting right away. I called it The Tunnel of Lies. I had Kennedy going into the tunnel and the American Legion and Barry Goldwater coming out of it. The American flag and the girls and the hearts and the band—the typical American convention… [Goldwater stood] for something I saw coming out of that tunnel, something to do with money and power, making it seem all right, making it seem clean, the money and power that supported all the lies. Tremendous batch of lies.
Fasanella’s resulting painting, which he subsequently retitled American Tragedy, is another large-scale horizontal canvas. Like Gray Day and McCarthy Period, this work has a focal point incorporating the letter A along with images of malevolence and injustice. In American Tragedy, however, Fasanella shrinks the A to fit into the stained-glass window of the main building (representing the Texas Book Depository from which Oswald allegedly fired his shots) and places his focal point significantly off center to the left. The result is a more sophisticated composition than the Rosenberg paintings, as the juxtaposition of steep diagonals at left and long, shallow ones at right give the piece a visual dynamism not previously seen in Fasanella’s work. American Tragedy is an unfolding drama, history in motion.

At the vortex of this receding space is the depository, which features a large stained-glass front with the aforementioned A along with hooded Klansmen, members of the John Birch Society, a topless dancer and a neon sign for the fictional nightclub “Ruby’s Carousel”—part house of horrors and part whorehouse.¹ In a window on the right side of the building the lone figure of Oswald points his rifle at the Kennedy motorcade. At ground level below this window a lone motorcycle rides away over the grassy knoll, possibly chasing a second shooter. Above the building, a hooded Klansman leads other figures in a dance of celebration (or dance of death) around a devil’s mask.²

Dominating the canvas by virtue of its placement and size is a lone rider on horseback riding roughshod over the grave of Kennedy in front of the depository. This figure—part businessman, part cowboy, and
part Klansman—is a composite of Barry Goldwater, and Lyndon Johnson.¹ The image evokes the biblical horsemen of the Apocalypse, or the figure of death on a pale horse. The symbolic meaning of this image is at the heart of the message: that the Kennedy assassination had an economic motive. Fasanella explained:

The guy on the horse represents the whole South of today. Rich, powerful Cowboy. He has a cowboy hat with a KKK hood, but he’s really a sharp guy, a businessman with a blue shirt and a pink tie—the Southern guy with money. The industrial South. They kill people. In all kinds of ways. I think this was the group that did the job on Kennedy.²

Fasanella saw the assassination as part of a conflict between up-and-coming southern industrialists and established bankers in the Northeast, with African Americans caught in the middle. He saw Kennedy’s efforts to aid southern blacks—who were dispossessed of jobs and land by the industrial transformation of the South—as a strategy to save capitalism through liberal reform. Kennedy was therefore murdered by anti-reformists who stood to gain economically from his elimination.³

For Fasanella, the civil rights movement is the backdrop to this drama, as he felt it was the catalyst for Kennedy’s reforms and, thus, his death. He devotes the entire left side of the canvas to allusions to the struggle for equal rights for blacks in the South. In order to communicate the breadth and scope of the movement, Fasanella chose (for perhaps the first time in his painting career) to render copies of popular media images that would be instantly recognizable.
Near the top of the canvas are three figures chained to trees, representing Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Mickey Schoerner, civil rights workers murdered in 1964. Beside them is their burning station wagon, the remnants of which were pictured in Life magazine. Below Fasanella includes other popular images from Life: Martin Luther King Jr. and followers at the 1963 March on Washington; a Freedom Bus burning; a church burning; and the lone figure of Ruby Bridges, a young black girl who single-handedly integrated a New Orleans elementary school in 1960. Below the figure of King, Fasanella includes other scenes taken from photographic images, such as the 1963 riots in Birmingham, Alabama, where a fireman trains a high-pressure hose on black marchers, while a policeman with dogs attacks a black man. At the bottom, Bayard Rustin addresses protesters outside a factory building, calling for jobs. Most of these images would have had immediacy in 1964, and they all were clearly photojournalistic icons of change and conflict in the South.¹

The right side of American Tragedy features a large field of oil wells that double as missile silos, forming an effective symbol of American money and power. Fasanella remembered the inspiration for this section of the canvas: “Once I was down in El Paso or one of the cities in Texas, and it was in the McCarthy period so I had this haunted feeling anyway, but I caught it from those oil wells, flames coming up at night, I caught this feeling of hell.”¹ These flaming oil wells sit astride a huge new factory building, under a dark red sky where oval, globular shapes seem to float over barren hills in a vast wasteland. Beneath the oil well on the far right appears another group of conspirators meeting behind closed doors.² At the lower right, policemen drag black sit-in protesters out of a restaurant while a black waiter and a black service-man and his family look on. In this vignette Fasanella juxtaposes protest against the state with service or servility to it, as a way of posing a fundamental question to the viewer: By what means will society change?
If American Tragedy is any indication, Fasanella felt that the American public had to be startled out of its complacency and instructed in the connections among the cataclysmic events that shaped the 1960s. Fasanella does this by relying on his Catholic upbringing with its traditions of sharply distinguishing good from evil. At the core of this painting, orchestrating the many political and social tragedies, is pure capitalist greed. This singular message underscores the persistence of Fasanella’s socialist beliefs through the dangerous times of the McCarthy period and Cold War and now into the chaotic upheavals of the new decade. This philosophy of social economic cooperation, along with his embracing of traditional Judeo-Christian imagery, gives structure, order, and expressive power to Fasanella’s work throughout his career. And in his fifty years of painting, in no other work does the artist bring together such a wide range of subject matter so successfully as in American Tragedy.

Fasanella’s grasp of artistic theory is another factor in his successful development of a mature style for his large paintings of social protest. Although not formally schooled, Fasanella’s inclination toward voracious reading and looking led him to absorb approaches to imagery and composition that he could then adapt to his own ends. Of all the artists who painted protest scenes, none was closer to Fasanella’s style than the famous Mexican muralist Diego Rivera (1886-1957). Fasanella’s large protest paintings owe a great deal to Rivera’s influence.

In the fall of 1966 Ralph and Eva produced the first printed reproduction of one of his paintings for distribution, a large color postcard of American Tragedy. The Fasanella’s attempted to distribute these cards by selling them at Happy & Bud’s, mailing them out to friends and relatives, and bringing them to local and regional art shows. Although the card did not provide meaningful income or bring the painting to a
mass audience, the reaction it provoked among the patrons of the gas station proved heartening.

The Fasanella’s sorely needed the encouragement, as there was little recognition and few sales during this time period. The inscription on the American Tragedy postcard indicates that Fasanella did have gallery representation at the Washington Irving Gallery on 16th Street in Manhattan. The postcard also included a translation of a review that had appeared in the Paris art journal La Revue Moderne: “Ralph Fasanella’s paintings are social in the sense that particular attention is paid to the human body engulfed by the rhythm of the world into the existence of organized society.” Fasanella actually had a small one-man show at the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers in the fall of 1966, but it, like the other occasional breaks, did nothing to end the artistic isolation that had prevailed since the late 1940s.

An important catalyst for local recognition came in the form of a black clergyman, the Reverend Edler Hawkins of St. Augustine’s Church at 165th Street and Prospect Avenue, near Happy & Bud’s. In June 1968, Hawkins arranged for a show of Fasanella’s paintings at the all-black church. To publicize the show, he and the Fasanella’s put out flyers emphasizing American Tragedy and implying connections between the Kennedy assassination and that of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which had taken place just three months before.

Fasanella’s turn away from overt political content in his art may have been the result of his attitude toward the counterculture of the late 1960s. Although the civil rights movement had clearly energized him, Fasanella saw the emerging counterculture as arrogant and self-centered. He criticized the 1968 protests at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago as a “childish piece of outrage, politically naïve and
He felt that the Yippies, the Weathermen, and the other protesters had no real connection with the working class and no political acumen of the kind that organized millions of industrial workers in the 1930s. He stated:

You want to change the Democratic party? Go inside and change it! Go up and change it block by block! Get your roots! You’re not going to change nothing from the outside... You got to go down to the bottom. Open the book of knowledge. Teach people. You want to talk to the working guy? Tell him! There’s an answer, old man!

Fasanella also took issue with the New Left’s (particularly the hippies’) preoccupation with drugs and sex, as he states: “You want to smoke pot? Fuck upside down?” Fine! Do it on the side! You didn’t discover nothing. This has been discussed a long time, only people don’t hang out a sign about it.” He did not condemn sexual freedom, but simply placed it on the periphery of the more important human endeavor of self-education.

Fasanella, despite his rage at the self-indulgence of many in the New Left, conceded that “at least they raise some real questions. These other guys [the newly prosperous, unionized working class] are all talking about Cadillacs and horses and Wall Street.” His inability to forge an emotional connection with either the counterculture or the labor movement left him without a clear agenda in his art, and thus the paintings from the mid- and late 1960s meander among a variety of themes.
Fasanella’s perseverance in creating essentially public works without an audience indicates that painting as a means of self-expression was an essential part of his life. Painting commentaries on political matters about which the artist was passionate must have been cathartic. Significantly, however, Fasanella worked to improve his paintings by making them more accessible to a broad public. He did this by clarifying his compositions, using recognizable media images, and then moving on to incorporating popular topics such as baseball and urban genre. In seeing the world from the isolated perspective of Happy and Bud’s service station at 163rd Street, Fasanella’s greatest artistic achievement during the 1960s may have been that he kept painting at all. With this notion in mind, we can fully appreciate the immense visual power of a painting like American Tragedy.
Notes


3. Rob A. Okun, The Rosenbergs: Collected Visions of Artists and Writers (New York: Universe Books, 1988), 20. Fasanella further recalls to Okun how painting these works brought back “the restrictions of the period. The fear of painting, too. You were constantly on the verge of being in trouble.”


7. Watson, Fasanella’s City, 120.

8. Ibid., 120, 125.

10. Watson, Fasanella’s City, 128. The mask was originally a red and orange mushroom cloud. The original version of American Tragedy is reproduced on the mid-1960s postcard, a copy of which is in the possession of the author.


12. Watson, Fasanella’s City, 120, 125. The figure on horseback seems to personify what John Patrick Diggins has called “the four villains” of the Left: puritanism, capitalism, nationalism, and the frontier. In discussing Van Wyck Brooks’s cultural criticism during the 1920s in his book The Rise and Fall of the American Left (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1973), 139, Diggins states: “The pioneer, the patriot, the profiteer, and the puritan combined to produce the “philistine,” the nemesis of the Left in its struggle to awaken consciousness.”


15. Watson, Fasanella’s City, 125.

16. Ibid., 128. This detail, like the mask, was added later owing to the artist’s being “more than ever convinced of the depth of the conspiracy behind the killing of the President.”

17. Watson, Fasanella’s City, 129.
18. Ibid., and American Tragedy postcard, possession of the author.


20. Watson, Fasanella’s City, 132.


22. Watson, Fasanella’s City, 47.

23. For a discussion of the Old Left’s attitude toward the counterculture of the 1960s, see Diggins, The Rise and Fall of the American Left, 232-233. Diggins states that the radicals of the 1930s could not understand “youth’s renascent mysticism, which seemed more symptomatic of a religious revival than a social movement.” At the same time, the young radical disdained the Old Left as “establishment liberals” who mistakenly thought one could work through the system.

24. Watson, Fasanella’s City, 47, 50.

25. Ibid.

26. Watson, Fasanella’s City, 50.
AMERICAN HERITAGE, 1975
Ralph Fasanella (1914-1997)
Oil on canvas
50” x 80”
Essay by Marc Fasanella

My father was keenly aware of what it means to be an American. Having grown up in the economic and political cauldron of New York’s little Italy just after the turn of the century, and then moved as a teenager to the cultural as well as physical expansiveness of the Bronx, he formed a keen awareness of immigrant life. At the age of twenty-three he shipped off for France to join the Spanish Civil war with a group of ideologically motivated military volunteers. By the time he returned from Spain in 1938, he had gained a political and economic education of profound depth.

My father’s political education revealed to him the outlines of how a nation-state is formed, and how a corporate and military oligarchy orchestrates a national identity to their own benefit. In his painting “American Heritage,” he draws upon this political insight into national identity and the economic machinations that create it, to display the internal workings, showmanship, and drama that surround Washington politics.

I vividly remember him working on the painting surrounded by the political ephemera of the era. Labor history and civil rights buttons and leaflets, anti-Vietnam war placards, and Kennedy assassination, as well as Watergate newspaper and magazine clippings littered the walls and surfaces of his large studio. At the center of the painting is a flag-draped coffin, presumably that of John F. Kennedy, but in many ways it is iconic of all the elaborate state funerals that are used to draw a nation together and focus attention away from the geopolitical forces that shape it. Above the coffin, shown inside the White House, enjoying the advantage of their position and rank, are members of the military-industrial cabal manipulating international and national affairs to their financial gain. The central coffin is surrounded by many other coffins in a clock-like arrangement, from a pine box above to the coffins of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.
below. The Rosenberg’s, depicted surrounded by their books, were executed in 1953 by the Federal
government as a chilling message to the left-wing movement and the many secular Jewish workers and
intellectuals who populated the American left throughout the McCarthy era. The coffins of Julius and
Ethel are draped with flags because my father did not want the political right wing to take ownership of
the American identity. To the lower left a flag also adorns the coffin of Bernard “Bunny” Ruck, attended by
family and friends; just above this scene, to the right, is a coffin wrapped in a flag at an African American
funeral that is being both photographed and sniped at by the cameraman to their right. Above them,
just to the left, is Martin Luther King’s coffin, bearing a flag and carried by a military escort as his corpse is
about to be placed on a mule cart.

The Founders and presidents memorialized across the fascia of the White House may have played an
essential role in forming the recognized history of the American identity, but so too do the signatories
surrounding the “We the People” inscription at the lower portion of the pediment. I think my signature
may be on that small panel of the painting as well as those of others who visited his studio and the names
of those he grew up with. To either side of White House, in the upper portions, are protesters doing their
utmost to end the Vietnam War. At the bottom is a pantheon of Americans who also deserve to be
memorialized as American icons. I remember my father painting this section over and over again trying
to decide who should be lionized in this way. He finally settled on the names now recorded but the list of
everyday Americans he found important and would include in a depiction of America’s heritage was far
too large to incorporate into any number of canvases.
FAREWELL COMRADE, 1996
Ralph Fasanella (1914-1997)
Oil on canvas
60” x 88”
Ralph Fasanella spent the last years of his life wrestling with the expansive and complex legacy of socialism and sorting out his thoughts and emotions in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Within a year of Mikhail Gorbachev’s resignation and Boris Yeltsin’s ascension to the Russian presidency, Fasanella had begun the extensive research into Russian and Soviet history necessary to rough out a large canvas dealing with the end of the Cold War. He conceived *Farewell Comrade – The End of the Cold War* as a triptych with a total width of more than ten feet—making the project an extraordinary intellectual, emotional, and pictorial challenge for the nearly eighty-year-old artist. During the course of about five years—from 1992 until his death in 1997—Fasanella worked on this painting in spurts, struggled with the details and, in the end, left the work unfinished.

For such a complex topic on such a grand scale, Fasanella created an exceptionally strong composition. To capture both the spectacle of Soviet life and its sudden demise, he created a large image for the center section combining a huge sports stadium with Lenin’s sarcophagus. Dominating the canvas, Lenin lies in state within the stadium, with his head resting near books that symbolize the formidable intellect that gave rise to the socialist experiment. Piles of Lenin’s books line the front wall of the stadium, facing the viewer, as if they were propping up the wall, and, by extension, the Soviet state itself. The names on the sides of the books—John Reed, Bill Haywood, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn—memorialize heroes in the fight for economic justice in America.¹

Directly behind the stadium, near the top of the canvas, two large newspapers proclaim the death of
socialism. Fasanella replicated the front page of the *New York Times* from December 25, 1991, with the headline “Gorbachev, Last Soviet Leader Resigns,” and the tabloid *New York Post*’s pithier “Farewell, Comrade.” Smaller headlines reflect Fasanella’s penchant for sports metaphors: “Gorbachev fumbles the ball” and “Yanks take big one.” Across the top of the entire center section (almost ninety inches wide) the artist headlines the painting with the words “Capitalism Defeats and Destroys 1st Socialist State.”

At the left and right of the triptych’s center section Fasanella counterbalances two pictorial devices that symbolize socialism’s ascendance and decline. At the left a large tower topped with a globe sports red banners trumpeting the accomplishments and sacrifices of socialism, such as the victory over the Nazis at Stalingrad, fighting Franco in Spain, universal health care and jobs, and the loss of twenty-two million citizens and soldiers in World War II. On the globe Fasanella shows the Soviet star, rising “higher and higher” in the words of a popular socialist song. In contrast to the upward thrust of the tower and globe, at the right a pictorial construction descends through a series of plaques listing Soviet troubles, including Stalinism, the CIA and KGB, America spending ninety billion dollars to defeat the Soviet Union, and Reagan tripling the deficit with military spending. At the bottom Fasanella paints a billiard table with balls careening in all directions to symbolize the breakup of the Soviet Union into independent republics.

The triptych’s wings (which no longer accompany the center panel) contrast Soviet and American culture, but Fasanella left these sections far more unfinished. Josef Stalin presides over the left section, as he reviews tanks and troops in a May Day parade. At the center of the parade a large missile thrusts its nose toward the viewer. The regimented militarism of this panel contrasts sharply with the right side of the triptych, where American symbols of democracy and power (the Capitol building and a large missile) flank a *USA Today* newspaper with headlines exposing the problems of American society and of capitalism.

*Farewell, Comrade* is, in many ways, a companion to *May Day*, Fasanella’s optimistic 1948 painting of the socialist dream. The two works, divided by half a century of the Cold War, chronicle the rise and fall
of one of humanity’s great social experiments. Whereas May Day exudes pure joy, Farewell, Comrade is full of conflicting emotions. Fasanella insisted that the fall of the Soviet Union did not leave him in crisis, because, as he stated: “I’ve always been an independent thinker.” He had long before seen through the Soviet deception and had a harsh assessment of the failed socialist state: “What we got out of the Soviet Union over the past fifty to sixty years was a batch of lies. They never carried out socialism. They carried out dictatorship.”

Yet the making of Farewell, Comrade also caused Fasanella to reflect upon his own youthful devotion to socialism as exemplified by the Soviet Union. “We had a blind faith,” he recalled. “The great thinkers were Trotskyites. Maybe if we’d had an open mind we’d have gotten some answers.” Still, the death of a dream did not come easy, and painting Farewell, Comrade proved wrenching, as Fasanella recalled: “I’m in pain with this thing because I believed in socialism and I never thought it would fall apart.”

Farewell, Comrade thus explores the end of the Cold War with a mixture of questioning, anger, regret, and trepidation. The painting poses the question of why or how the Soviet Union toppled, and hints at an anticommunist collusion between Reagan, Gorbachev, and Pope John Paul II with a vignette of the three leaders “dividing the world” at the lower left of the center section. Fasanella also expresses his anger over Soviet abuses of power, such as rampant militarization, the suppression of regional cultures in favor of an all-powerful state, and the use of the KGB against the people. In addition, Farewell, Comrade carries a distinct feeling of regret at the end of socialism and the sweeping away of a great progressive tradition that included the defeat of fascism. Lastly, Fasanella knowingly points out that the victorious system—capitalism—has a host of its own problems that make Russia’s (and America’s) future uncertain.

Although Fasanella never finished Farewell, Comrade, he never gave up trying to complete the
work to his satisfaction. In his eighties Fasanella seems to have retained his creative ability but no longer had the energy or facility with the paintbrush to execute his compositions. Thus he labored over every inch of this canvas, at times painting over various details (such as the stars on the sides of the stadium) dozens of times until he was satisfied. His conflicting emotions over the death of socialism only exacerbated the difficulty in completing this work, as Fasanella’s art fed as much on his feelings as it did on his ability. In the end he directed Eva Fasanella to have a young studio assistant who had been helping with the painting do the finish work.

Fasanella’s health deteriorated rapidly in the summer and fall of 1997. A heavy smoker for much of his life, he had been diagnosed with emphysema several years earlier. The disease had slowly taken its toll, and by late November the artist had to be hospitalized. During the following two weeks, Fasanella received dozens of visits from family and long-time friends, and despite his condition he regaled them with stories told in his gruff staccato with his usual earthy wit.

Fasanella died on December 16, 1997 at St. John’s Riverside Hospital in Yonkers, N.Y. He was buried at Mount Hope Cemetery in Hastings-on-Hudson in a simple ceremony that included remarks by close friends and the singing of “Bread and Roses.” Fasanella’s epitaph, in his own words, summed up the artist’s life in a few concise lines:

Lest We Forget
Remember Who You Are
Remember Where You Came From
Don’t Forget the Past
Change the World
Notes


2. Ralph Fasanella, interview by author, Ardsley, N.Y., videotape recording, 1 November 1993.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ralph Fasanella interview, 7 February 19