

Due to copyright restrictions,
this image is only available
in the print version
of *Christian Reflection*.

Philip Evergood's *The Pink Dismissal Slip* expresses his concern for the exploitation of poor workers during the Great Depression.

Philip Evergood (1901-1973). THE PINK DISMISSAL SLIP (1937). Oil on hardboard. 28" x 22 ½". Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. Gift of Harry N. Abrams. Photograph courtesy of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University. Used by permission.

Dismissed

BY HEIDI J. HORNICK

A leader in the American Social Realist movement in the 1930s, Philip Evergood was born in New York and educated in London and Paris. He also studied in Spain before returning to the United States in 1931 during the Great Depression. Through both his expressionistic art and his personal actions, Evergood fought against the exploitation of the poor.¹

Evergood painted for and managed the easel painting section in the Federal Arts Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). As a member of the American Artists' Congress and the American Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers, as well as president of the Artists' Union, he was well acquainted with the plight of the American artist as the worldwide depression wore on.² He was frequently jailed for protesting and striking. He was beaten severely in 1936 after a protest against cuts to the WPA that dismissed 1,923 artists and writers. *The Pink Dismissal Slip* shows an artist receiving notification of his dismissal from the Arts Project. The figure holds an envelope addressed to "John Doe" symbolizing all the artists involved. An exposed light bulb emphasizes that he lives in a low-income apartment complex. The painting is dominated by a vibrant, almost violent, red color.

Although Evergood painted biblical subjects for a period, he was more often inspired to depict the dramatic events of his day. His style, much influenced by the German expressionist Max Beckmann,⁴ features unrealistic perspective and almost comical, larger-than-life figures with exaggerated gestures, disproportionate bodies, and expressive faces. The artist hoped his work would be a voice for the poor and glorify working families.⁵

NOTES

1 John I. H. Baur, "Evergood, Philip," *Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T027097 (accessed June 12, 2015).

2 "Evergood, Philip," *Benezit Dictionary of Artists, Oxford Art Online* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press) www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/benezit/B00060452 (accessed June 12, 2015).

3 "The Pink Dismissal Slip," Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, museum.cornell.edu/collections/view/pink-dismissal-slip.html (accessed June 10, 2015).

4 "Evergood, Philip," *Benezit Dictionary of Artists*.

5 Baur, "Evergood, Philip."