

Fritz Brosius Biography

Friedrich (Fritz) August Brosius was born in Berlin, Germany, on September 13, 1904. His father, also Friedrich, was a dentist who developed new methods to reconstruct the mouths and jaws of soldiers wounded in World War I. Fritz went through the German Spartacus uprising of 1918-19 and the tumultuous Weimar period that followed. He was heavily influenced by the German Expressionist movement and, like many German artists, he attended the Berlin Kunstgewerbeschule. He joined Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater, known for elaborate avant-garde productions of Greek classics, Shakespeare and contemporary works.

In 1925 Fritz's mother Helen (née Young) left her husband and returned to her birthplace of South Carolina with Fritz and his three sisters. Brosius quickly moved to New York City and became part of the Communist Party dominated cultural life from Harlem to Greenwich Village. A member of the John Reed Club, Fritz signed a May 19, 1930 statement in the *New York Times* denouncing the "Red Scare." That year, Brosius designed scenery at Camp Nitgedaiget, a leftist summer camp outside New York City. In 1930 he also worked on sets for and performed in one of the first U.S. productions of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* that featured Martha Graham. He studied with Bauhaus designer Herbert Bayer through the American Advertising Guild.

In 1932, after the New York John Reed Clubs were forced to admit their 'grave error' in asking the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera—then a supporter of Leon Trotsky—to speak, Fritz broke discipline by going to Rivera's New York studio as an act of defiance against the party's campaign. An ardent supporter of the Consumers Cooperative Movement in New York, he illustrated an article by Oscar Cooley titled "What Consumers Cooperation Means to a Depression Sick America" published in a 1932 issue of the magazine *Cooperation: Organ of the Consumers Cooperative Movement in the U.S.A.* He was also heavily involved in the Harlem Coop cafeteria organizing drive in 1938. Like many artists, he was supported by the Work Projects Administration Federal Art Project, which went from 1935 to 1943 and he was among the WPA artists who, starting in 1935, designed the pavilions and publicity for the World's Fair of 1939-40.

In 1938 he left the CP. That year he married Leonore Teller-Kelter. They had two children: Carl (1943) and Helene (1945). In the mid 1940s until 1960, Fritz Brosius was Art Director of the Promotion Department of *Time* magazine. Around 1955 he worked with Antonio Frasconi, expanding his proficiency with woodcut printing. The color woodcuts he produced in the next two decades form the core of his portfolio.

During his last decades, he devoted himself largely to calligraphy in various media. He was a beloved teacher of calligraphy at various locations around New York. Around 1988 Brosius designed the logo for the bookplate and stationery of the Prometheus Research Library in New York City. His work, spanning 60 years, includes woodcut, collage, tempera paintings, watercolors, mosaics, paper-maché masks and sculptures and calligraphy. Fritz Brosius died on May 23, 1992.

--Helene Brosius (daughter of Fritz Brosius), September 2022