

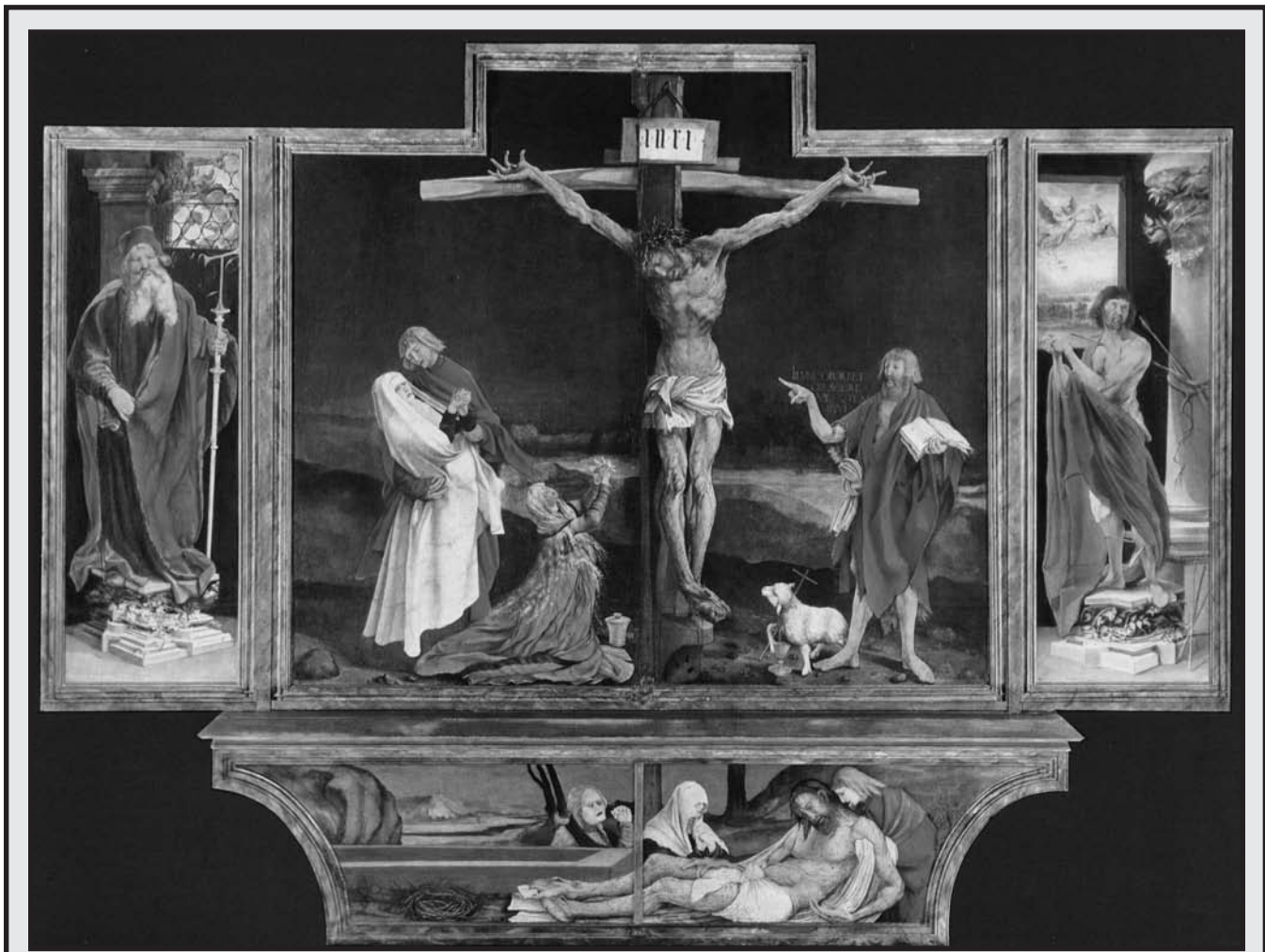
Reformation is Dominikos Theotokopoulos, known as El Greco. El Greco was strongly influenced by Tintoretto's paintings, and he worked for a period of time in Titian's workshop in Venice. In 1576, El Greco left Italy for Toledo, Spain. El Greco is one of the most well-known of the Mannerist painters, and his dramatic use of elongated figures captured the religious fervor of the Counter Reformation. The works of both El Greco and Tintoretto can be seen as transitional works bridging the end of the Renaissance and the beginning of the Baroque period.

### THE RENAISSANCE IN NORTHERN EUROPE

During the fifteenth century, the artworks being produced in northern Europe were smaller in scale than those of contemporaneous artists to the south. However, the work of northern artists displayed a degree of realistic detail beyond what can be seen in

works of the south, primarily due to their use of new oil paints. While the Renaissance was occurring in Italy, much of European art north of the Alps was still Gothic in style. The influence of classical antiquity was also much less of a factor in the north, as the northerners did not share Italy's cultural connection with ancient Rome, nor did they have the advantage of being in close proximity to ancient Roman works as did their Italian counterparts.

The art of northern Europe in the sixteenth century demonstrates a far greater awareness of the Italian Renaissance than that of the fifteenth century. Many artists traveled to Italy to study the great works of the Renaissance, and some Italian artists brought these ideas with them when they traveled to the north. Engravers copied some of the more notable Italian works, and these engravings became available throughout Europe, thus spreading the ideas and styles of the Renaissance. Trade connections between upper-



A partial view of Matthias Grünewald's *Insenheim Altarpiece*.

ing that Rivera painted this work just months prior to the creation of the Public Works of Art Project, which was initiated in December of 1933. The *Detroit Industry* mural is the largest and most complex work that Rivera completed in the United States, and its theme is especially interesting in the context of New Deal art, given its focus on labor and industry during a time of economic depression.

Rivera's *Detroit Industry* mural is located in the Garden Court of the Detroit Institute of Arts. The entire work consists of twenty-seven separate mural panels covering four walls. For this project, Rivera had to ensure that his paintings would harmonize with the architecture, complementing columns, archways, and other architectural divisions of the space. The main entrances to the courtyard are located on the east and west walls, and consequently these walls contain relatively few painted panels. The panels on these walls are also small in size compared to the north and south walls. The cycle begins on the east wall, which depicts the origins of human life, shown as an infant tucked inside a plant bulb buried deep within Michigan's landscape. On either side of the plant bulb, Rivera depicted plowshares penetrating the earth, symbolic of the technology of agriculture. This horizontally oriented panel is flanked by small images of the agricultural products of Michigan—apples, corn, pumpkins, and grapes, for example—above which appear two monumental female nudes, allegorical symbols of the harvest. Similarly, the west wall focuses on intersections of technology, natural resources, and human life, exploring the technologies that allow humans access to water and the air.

The north and south walls are much larger, and the themes established in the east and west walls become more complex here. The images on both walls are placed in three distinct horizontal fields. From top to bottom, these include allegorical representations of the races, shown as monumental nude women with various skin tones. These images are flanked by scenes illustrating the major industries of Detroit beyond automobile production, including the pharmaceutical and chemical industries. Below this are representations of the raw materials of Michigan, shown through a cross-section of the geological strata. The largest panels move beyond allegory to depict in great detail the daily lives of workers in the Detroit automobile industry.

The south wall, included in the *USAD Art Reproductions Booklet*, depicts the production of an automobile's exterior in the largest panel. Rivera sought to make his depictions of the factory interior, which were based on his meticulous first-hand study of the Ford Motor plant, as accurate as possible. A tremendous stamping press dominates the far right quarter of the composition. This machine was used to make steel fenders. A portion of another stamping press is also illustrated in the upper left portion of

the panel. In the lower left, we see workers working on the body panels of the automobile, supervised by a foreman who can be identified as Charles E. Sorenson, head of production at Ford's River Rouge factory at the time. The upper center portion of the panel depicts a welding buck, where major pieces of the automobile are welded together. Right below this we see an impressive assembly line in the factory.

In the foreground, an engine, the heart of the automobile, is lowered to the line. At the far end of the assembly a finished car is visible. Other smaller details include a group of female workers testing spark plugs and ignition systems (in the upper right corner) and painters at work on the auto body (in the upper left corner). Below the central panel, Rivera included six smaller panels painted in grisaille (black, white, and shades of grey), reminiscent of a technique used on some Renaissance altarpieces. These small panels show other aspects of automobile production, such as the manufacture of glass. The third panel from the left shows a trade school class led by Henry Ford, the patriarch of the Ford family and founder of the company, depicted in a recognizable portrait.<sup>4</sup>

Rivera also included portraits of his patrons and supporters in the central panel, hearkening back to the donor portraits that were often included in Renaissance altarpieces. Edsel Ford and William Valentiner are shown in the lower right, on the far side of the largest stamping press. William Valentiner was the director of the Detroit Institute of Arts from 1924–45. He met Rivera in San Francisco and began to plan the commission for the Detroit Institute of Arts mural at that time. Edsel Ford (son of Henry) was not only the president of the Ford Motor Company, he was also a great supporter of the arts and served as president of the Detroit Arts Commission. He provided a gift to the museum that made the payment for Rivera's work possible, and he also supported Rivera by commissioning a private portrait.

The central panel of the wall is extremely detailed with its meticulous investigation of factory production. Moving toward the top of the wall, the panels become increasingly simple in their composition, making it possible for the viewer to see the imagery from the ground. Immediately above the central panel we see a horizontally oriented image showing the geological strata of limestone and sand. The figures above this panel, representing the Caucasian and Asian races, hold these materials in their hands. Gigantic hands reach up from deep within the earth, grasping as if seeking raw materials. The small panel in the upper left depicts work in the pharmaceutical industry, showing a male chemist surrounded by female workers who are sorting pills. And, the small panel in the upper right shows the chemical industry, with an image illustrating the production of commercial chemicals.