The tragedy of homelessness and poverty in the United States over the last 75 years - and the government's role in responding to the crisis - is presented in the compelling and timely exhibition and tour of Hobos to Street People: Artists' Responses to Homelessness from the New Deal to the Present. The first exhibition of its kind to look at homelessness through art, it is presented by the California Exhibition Resources Alliance (CERA) and will premiere at the California Historical Society, in San Francisco, California, February 19 through August 15, 2009. Curated by Art Hazelwood, the exhibition features the work of 30 artists including new Deal-era artists such as Dorothea Lange, Rockwell Kent, and Giacomo Pati along with contemporary artists such as Sandow Birk, David Bacon, and Christine Hanlon. Through painting, printmaking, photogra-phy, and mixed media, these Depression-era and contemporary artists offer stark glimpses of life on the street and show many similarities between the eras.

The exhibition at the California Historical Society also marks the premier of a statewide California tour slated for multiple venues through 2011 including: the Koffligo Library at the University of California, Merced; the Corona Public Library in Corona; the Hayward Area Historical Society in Hayward; and the de Sainst Museum at Santa Clara University in Santa Clara. Accompanying the exhibition is an audio tour featuring exhibition curator, Art Hazelwood, along with historian Dr. Charles Wellsen, advisor Paul Bodin and several of the featured artists. It provides additional insights into the issue of homelessness as well as the work of the artists.

Hobos to Street People: Artists' Responses to Homelessness from the New Deal to the Present is the first exhibition and audio tour of its kind to focus on the issue of homelessness through art. Curated by San Francisco, California-based artist and exhibition contributor, Art Hazelwood, the exhibition takes a thematic approach in examining the tragedy of homelessness and the government's role over the past 75 years in dealing with the crisis. The themes of Daily Realities, Displacement, Rootlessness and Vulnerability, Urban vs. Rural, Struggle and Hope, offer the viewer a sobering statement on homelessness from life on the street - to how the struggles and hopes of the hopeless have changed as views of government's role in society have changed.

"Some of the artists in this exhibition personally experienced homelessness and poverty, and some worked directly with organ-izations to combat poverty, but all of them felt that art could be used to focus attention on homelessness," explained curator Art Hazelwood. "The idea that art can have a function in society by engaging in a struggle for a better world, and that everyone should take an interest in the well-being of less fortunate people are the twin beliefs of the artists in this show."

During the Great Depression, New Deal programs such as the Works Progress Administration funded artists to document what was happening in the country. Artists focused their attention on issues of human rights, and due to the large number of poor and displaced people, homelessness became a central focus of their work. Following World War II, artists shifted their energies elsewhere, but by the 1970s a period of increased pover-ty and economic inequality once again stimulated artists to focus their atten-