

School of Art

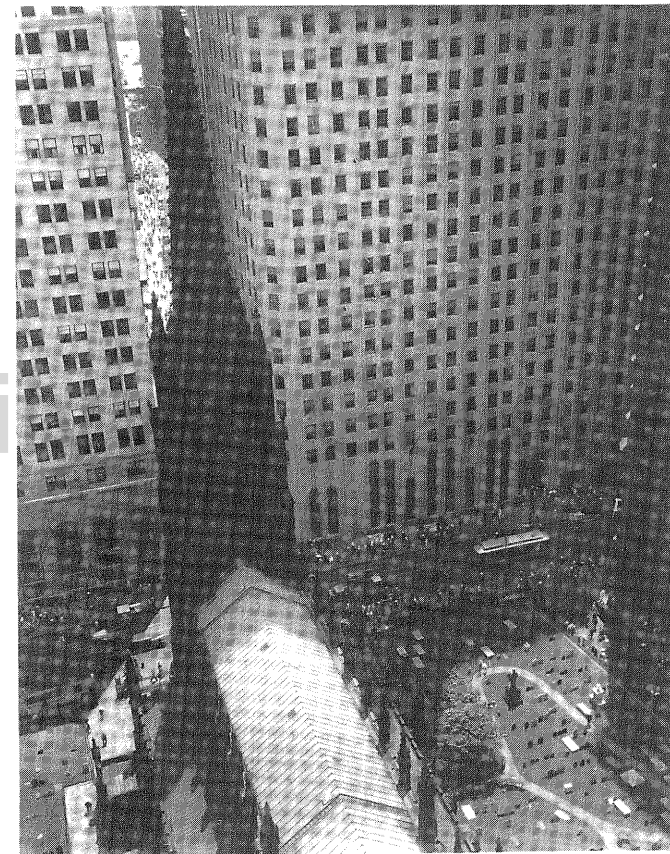
College of Visual and Performing Arts

Syracuse University

THE URBAN IMAGE IN AMERICAN ART, WORLD WAR I-WORLD WAR II

Selected works from the holdings of Syracuse University in the University Art Collection, the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections and the E. S. Bird Library. February 3-28, 1988

Fig. A1 Berenice Abbott
Trinity Church and Wall Street Towers, 1934
Photograph
Gift of Mr. Wolf Kahn and Ms. Emily Mason
SU 81.2397



*The city begins as a village, is sometimes soon a town
and then a city. Finally, perhaps, it becomes a Metrop-
olis; more often the city remains just another hamlet.¹*

—Frank Lloyd Wright, 1931

“Urban”—it is a word which sets the screen of our imagination alive with images of tall buildings and noisy, crowded streets. Thus it is a shock to learn that the historic definition of “urban” used by the U.S. Bureau of the Census was an incorporated place with at least 2500 or more inhabitants, and, under special rules, unincorporated places of a particular population and density.² Yet in another era when the United States was less populous; when travel was measured by days instead of hours or minutes, a village, town or small city might well become the focal point of social intercourse and commercial exchange for an entire region.

Following World War I, the complexity of the urban image was rendered with rare discernment by Sinclair Lewis in his novel of small-town life, *Main Street* (1920).³ Early in the narrative two women, unknown to each other, arrive in the town of Gopher Prairie, Minnesota on the same train. Lewis contrasts their first impressions. Carol Kennicott, a college-educated librarian from Minneapolis-St. Paul, who had attended professional school in Chicago, is horrified by what she sees in this town of 3300 people. For her, it is not just that the town is small; but it is so drab, graceless, dirty, incoherent and deathly quiet. For Bea Sorenson, a farm girl whose only previous experience of town life were visits to a burg of sixty-seven inhabitants, Gopher Prairie is sophisticated, thrilling and filled with marvelous variety and frightening sounds.⁴ Bea had escaped to Gopher Prairie to encounter a larger world and “the excitements of city-life.”⁵

In coming to Gopher Prairie, one woman found a depressing village encircled by the endless plains, whereas the other found an exciting city of vast possibilities. For Lewis, however, *Main Street* revealed “not only the heart of a place called Gopher Prairie, but ten thousand towns from Albany to San Diego.”⁶

LOWE
JOE AND EMILY
LOWE
ART
GALLERY

Syracuse University

Lewis' view was inclusive: it covered larger, older centers of inhabitation such as Albany, as well as such small towns as that described by Sherwood Anderson in his novel of 1919, *Winesburg, Ohio*, which with a population of 1800, fell seven-hundred short of the urban minimum set by the U.S. Census.⁷ For the next two decades these two novels by Lewis and Anderson became touchstones against which the contradictions and images of American urban life outside the large cities came to be judged.⁸

The artist most profoundly affected by the moody imagery of Lewis and Anderson was Charles Burchfield. Their novels verified a particular view of the American town which dominated much of his art. Raised in Salem, Ohio, Burchfield had a vision of the American urban scene which was originally defined by the towns and cities of the northeastern section of his home state, and later confirmed by his experience of urban places in western New York, especially Buffalo. His painting, *Sun, Moon and Stars* (1920-1955), is an extension of a watercolor he had originally done in 1920 of the factory town of East Liverpool which overlooks that finger of West Virginia land separating Pennsylvania and Ohio. Burchfield's urban America is not one of skyscrapers, nor busy crowds. More often than not, it is made up of low-rise buildings, almost unpeopled streets and roads, with the forces of nature hovering in the not-too-distant background. In much of Burchfield's art, the distinction between urban and rural is often made grey as the one fades into the other in the same way that the plains ooze into Gopher Prairie and the farm fields merge with Winesburg.⁹

Something of the ennui that hovers over the writings of Lewis and Anderson is suggested in Berenice Abbott's photographs of small towns (1935). Like Burchfield, Abbott was a native of Ohio. Her scenes of small town urban America in this exhibition convey an almost enervating placidity. The images seem to be taken not only from a physical distance, but from a spiritual distance as well. In sharp contrast, Abbott's images of New York City are engaged and energetic in a manner equal to the metropolis itself.

From the hundreds of photographs she took of the City in the Thirties, several of which are in the exhibition, ninety-seven were chosen for the volume, *Changing New York* (1939).¹⁰ Among the salient qualities of her montage of images is her view of New York as a city of neighborhoods, and even in some respects, a city of towns, each quite different from the others.

In 1938, just one year prior to Abbott's book, two seminal studies of "the urban" were published in the social sciences: Louis Wirth's essay, "Urbanism as a Way of Life" and Lewis Mumford's volume, *The Culture of Cities*.¹¹ Wirth, a leading urban sociologist, created an image of the city based in large part on his experience of Chicago where he had lived and worked. Wirth's definition of urban America, and the image it generated, both summarized much of the social science research and writing of the period and helped to set the future course of urban studies:

For sociological purposes, a city may be defined as a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals.¹²

In his view the three population factors of numbers, density and heterogeneity, created a social structure in which people were

physically close, but had social relationships which were of a secondary rather than primary nature. That is, during the course of the day, the urbanite constantly crosses paths with other individuals, yet only the smallest number of all of these people could be considered either friends or family. Thus life becomes transitory and impersonal. Power arises through associations of individuals coming together for a common purpose, rather than through such primary social groups as a family.

In Wirth's estimation, and his view was certainly bolstered by the events of the Depression, "...the city discourages an economic life in which the individual in time of crisis has a basis of subsistence to fall back upon, and it discourages self-employment." Wirth believed that in the city "the individual counts for little" and is "reduced to a stage of virtual impotence."¹³

More than any work in this exhibition, Edward Hopper's *Night Shadows* of 1921 (Fig. A4), with its lone figure, diminished by the voyeuristic viewpoint from high above the street and threatened by an almost macabre play of light and shadow, expresses that profound personal isolation Wirth describes. In quite another manner, such images of the unemployed as "You can sense the change of mayors in the soup" of 1932 (Fig. B3) by Alan Dunn and *Breadline* (1929) and *The Jungle* (1934) by Reginald Marsh, evoke the economic hopelessness facing the city-dweller during the Depression. Taking their imagery from conditions in New York City, where by 1931 the unemployment rate had risen to thirty-three percent, Dunn and Marsh described a national tragedy.¹⁴

The awful pain and discouragement of prolonged unemployment would be, at least for some individuals, preferable to the lowest and most vile jobs usually available in cities regardless of economic conditions. Dwarfed by mountains of waste filling his enclosed work space, Margaret Bourke-White's image of a single worker, *Pig Dust, Swift Meat, Chicago* (1929), is but one of a series of photographs she took documenting one of the mainstays of the Chicago economy, the meat processing and packing industry.

As profound as Wirth's summary view was, it best described the central districts of Chicago and New York, rather than the small city or town, and it provided little account of the growth of the suburban rings around Chicago or New York. As Alan Dunn's drawings from the late Twenties and Thirties for the *New Yorker Magazine* demonstrate, the suburbs were rapidly growing, homogenous and strongly based on the primary association of immediate family. In his 1938 study, Mumford's image of the city coincided with that of Wirth, but differed in its greater extent, and it was just this difference which was critical. Mumford declared that the city was

a geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theater of social action, and an esthetic symbol of collective unity.¹⁵

Mumford was, especially in *The Culture of Cities*, more than a social scientist: he was a visionary and poet. It was this impassioned strain in his intellectual make-up which allowed him to understand that

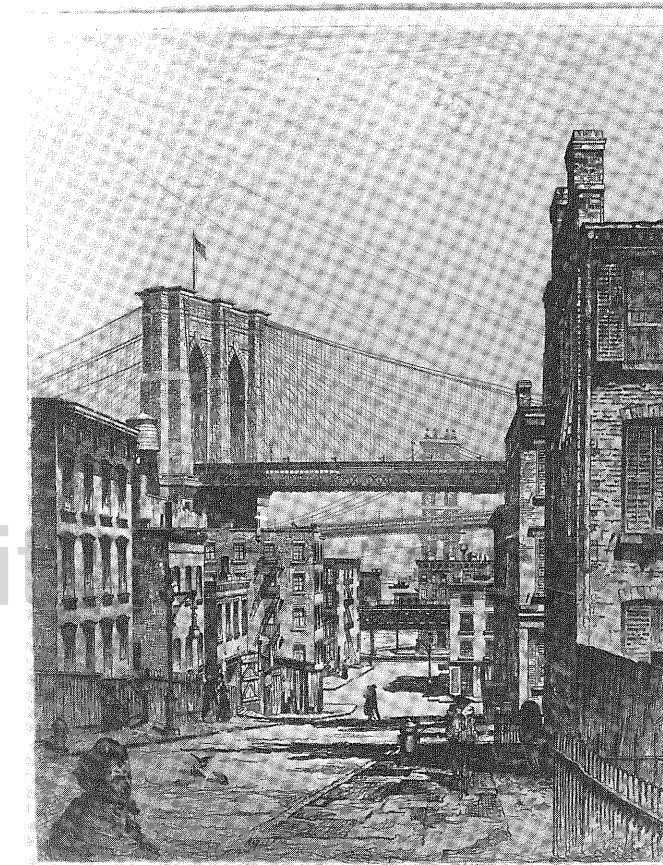
the city fosters art and is art; the city creates the theater and is the theater. It is in the city, the city as theater, that man's more purposive activities are formulated and worked out, through conflicting and

THE URBAN IMAGE IN AMERICAN ART, WORLD WAR I-WORLD WAR II

Selected works from the holdings of Syracuse University in the University Art Collection, the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections and the E. S. Bird Library.

February 3-28, 1988

Fig. B1 John Taylor Arms
Cobwebs, c. 1920
Etching
Gift of Mr. Cloud Wampler
SU 66.2059



JOE AND EMILY LOWE ART GALLERY COLLEGE OF VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Dimensions are given in inches, height before width, and refer to the size of the image unless otherwise noted. Works from the Syracuse University Art Collection are identified by SU followed by an accession number. Works from the Margaret Bourke-White Collection, the George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University are identified by MB-WC, GARL, followed by Box, Folder, and Image numbers as available. Works from the E. S. Bird Library, Syracuse University are identified by BL and a call number. Brackets [] indicate additional information for untitled and titled works.

Berenice Abbott
(Springfield, Ohio, 1898-)

Rockefeller Center, 1932
Silver gelatin print
13⁷/₁₆ x 10¹/₂

Gift of Mr. Marvin Sackner
SU 81.2402

St. Paul's Chapel, New York City,
c. 1934

Photograph

13³/₈ x 10³/₈
Gift of Ms. Ruth Plotsky
SU 81.2305

*Trinity Church and Wall Street
Towers*, 1934

Photograph

13¹/₄ x 10³/₈
Gift of Mr. Wolf Kahn and
Ms. Emily Mason
SU 81.2397

Chillicothe, Ohio, 1935

Silver gelatin print

7¹³/₁₆ x 9¹¹/₁₆
Gift of Mr. Emanuel Azenburg
SU 81.2316

Elston, Illinois, 1935

Photograph

7³/₈ x 9¹⁰/₁₀
Gift of Mr. Thorne Donnelley
SU 81.2213

*Church of God, 25 W. 132nd
Street*, 1937

Silver gelatin print

10⁷/₁₆ x 13⁷/₁₆
Gift of Mr. Ben and
Mrs. Lesta Wunch
SU 81.2542

*Manhattan Skyline From
Weehauken, New Jersey
(Boulevard East and Hudson
Place)*, 1937

Silver gelatin print

10⁷/₁₆ x 13⁷/₁₆
Gift of Ms. Ruth Plotsky
SU 81.2302

Financial District, New York City,
n.d.

Photograph

Gift of Mr. Wolf Kahn and
Ms. Emily Mason
SU 81.2398

[National Roller Company], n.d.

Photograph

10⁵/₁₆ x 13¹/₈
Gift of Ms. Ruth Plotsky
SU 81.2304

John Taylor Arms
(Washington, D.C., 1887-1953)

Cobwebs, c. 1920

Etching

9⁵/₈ x 7³/₈
Gift of Mr. Cloud Wampler
SU 66.2059

Cecil C. Bell

(Seattle, Washington,
1906-1970)

In the Elevated Station, n.d.

Lithograph

8³/₈ x 11³/₄
Gift of Mr. Harry Wickey
SU 66.76

Subway Group No. 2, n.d.

Watercolor on paper

9⁷/₈ x 12⁷/₈
Gift of Mr. Harry Wickey
SU 66.496

Thomas Hart Benton

(Neosho, Montana, 1889-1975)

Edge of Town, 1938

Lithograph

10³/₄ x 8³/₈
Purchase
SU 68.28

Paul Berdanier

(Fracville, Pennsylvania,
1879-1961)

Coal, n.d.

Etching

7¹/₂ x 10¹/₂
Purchase
SU 71.134

Isabel Bishop

(Cincinnati, Ohio, 1902-)

Lunch Counter, n.d.

Etching

8 x 4³/₈
Purchase
SU 71.133

Hugh Pearce Botts
(New York City, New York,
1903–1964)

Coaldale, 1939
Aquatint
9 x 11⁷/₈
Purchase
SU 71.132

Margaret Bourke-White
(New York City, New York,
1904–1971)

Terminal Tower [from the
Cleveland Flats], c. 1927–28
Photograph
11³/₁₆ x 8⁴/₁₆
MB-WC, GARL
55-437

Pig Dust, Swift Meat, Chicago,
November 1929
Photograph
13³/₁₆ x 9³/₁₆
MB-WC, GARL
26-208-16

Dome, Chrysler Building, c. 1930
Photograph
6¹/₁₆ x 4¹/₁₆
MB-WC, GARL
64-3

Gargoyle, Chrysler Building,
c. 1930
Photograph
13¹/₁₆ x 9¹/₈
MB-WC, GARL
64-2

Necktie District with Signs,
c. 1932–33
Photograph
6¹/₁₆ x 13
MB-WC, GARL
47-36-4

[Chicago, for Eastern Airlines],
c. 1933
Photograph
7²/₁₆ x 9⁹/₁₆
MB-WC, GARL
8-80-2

[New York City, for Eastern
Airlines], c. 1933
Photograph
10 x 13³/₁₆
MB-WC, GARL
8-84-17

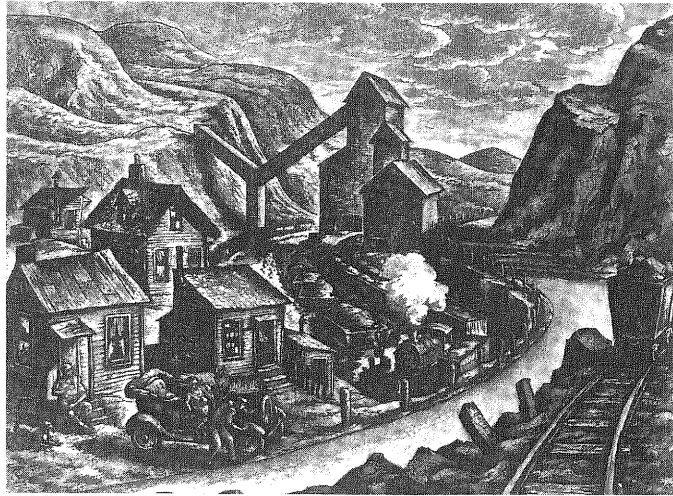


Fig. B2 Hugh Pearce Botts
Coaldale, 1939
Aquatint
Purchase
SU 71.132

Syd J. Browne
(Brooklyn, New York, 1907–)

East Side Market, c. 1945
Lithograph
9¹/₄ x 13
Purchase
SU 63.176

Charles Burchfield
(Ashtabula, Ohio, 1893–1967)

Sun, Moon, and Star, 1920–55
Watercolor
37¹/₂ x 54¹/₂
Purchased through Jalonack Fund
SU 58.6

Max Arthur Cohn
(London, England, 1904–)

City—Rain (Victor Food Store),
c. 1940
Serigraph
8³/₄ x 13³/₁₆
Purchase
SU 87.90

Creative Art, 8 (May 1931)
Essay by Frank Lloyd Wright,
“The Tyranny of the Skyscraper,”
pp. 324–332; opened to essay
and illustrations of two repro-
ductions of untitled lithographs
of New York City by Adriaan
Lubbers, pp. 326–327.
BL NIC91

Creative Art, 9 (August 1931)
Reproductions of drawings with
accompanying explanatory text
by Hugh Ferriss, “Examples from
the Recent Work of Hugh Ferriss,”
pp. 154–159 in special issue,
“New York of the Future,” opened
to pp. 158–159.
BL NIC91

Stephen Csoka
(Gardony, Hungary, 1897–)

Brooklyn Landscape, n.d.
Etching
8³/₈ x 10⁷/₈
Gift of Mr. Harry Wickey
SU 66.251

Alan Dunn
(Belmar, New Jersey, 1900–1974)

“Where is this unusual suburb?”
Pencil, ink, crayon
7¹/₂ x 5
Printed in *The New Yorker*
Magazine, December 10, 1927,
pp. 70–71.
Gift of Ms. Mary Petty and
Mr. Alan Dunn
University Art Collection

Pittsburgh at Night, n.d.
Lithograph
12⁷/₈ x 19
Gift of the Artist
SU 66.21111

Edward Hopper
(Nyack, New York, 1882–1967)

Night Shadows, 1921
Etching
6⁷/₈ x 8¹/₈
Purchase
SU 87.78

“They say it’s over a hundred
stories, but I’m taking. . .”
Crayon
18 x 12¹/₄
Printed in *The New Yorker*
Magazine, February 14, 1931, p. 27
Gift of Ms. Mary Petty and
Mr. Alan Dunn
SU 79.1839

“Does ‘ex’ take the ablative
or the dative?”
Crayon
18 x 12¹/₄
Printed in *The New Yorker*
Magazine, September 10, 1932,
p. 22
Gift of Ms. Mary Petty and
Mr. Alan Dunn
SU 79.1881

“You can sense the change of
mayors in the soup.”
Crayon
13⁷/₈ x 13³/₈
Printed in *The New Yorker*
Magazine, October 1, 1932, p. 11
Gift of Ms. Mary Petty and
Mr. Alan Dunn
SU 79.526

“Husbands arriving at suburban
homes simultaneously”
Crayon
12 x 13¹⁵/₁₆
Printed in *The New Yorker*
Magazine, July 30, 1938, p. 42
Gift of Ms. Mary Petty and
Mr. Alan Dunn
SU 79.656

Harry Gottlieb
(Rumania, 1895–)

Nor Rain Nor Snow, n.d.
Silk screen
10³/₈ x 13⁷/₈
Gift of the Artist
SU 66.2124

Pittsburgh at Night, n.d.
Lithograph
12⁷/₈ x 19
Gift of the Artist
SU 66.21111

Edward Hopper
(Nyack, New York, 1882–1967)

Night Shadows, 1921
Etching
6⁷/₈ x 8¹/₈
Purchase
SU 87.78

Dong Kingman
(Oakland, California, 1911–)

[Construction Scene], 1940
Watercolor on paper
15 x 22³/₈
Gift of the Artist

[Factory Scene], 1944
Watercolor on paper
15 x 22³/₄
Gift of the Artist
SU 66.404

[San Francisco Street], 1944
Watercolor on paper
15 x 22¹/₂
Gift of the Artist
SU 66.427

Martin Lewis
(Australia, 1882–1962)

The Orator, Madison Square, 1916
Etching
10⁷/₈ x 12³/₈
Purchase
SU 67.159

Fifth Avenue Bridge, 1928
Drypoint
9⁷/₈ x 11⁷/₈
Purchase
SU 67.157

Glow of the City, 1929
Drypoint
11¹/₂ x 14³/₈
Purchase
SU 67.158

Day’s End, 1937
Drypoint
9³/₈ x 13³/₈
Purchase
SU 67.156

Bedford Street Gang, n.d.
Drypoint
8⁷/₈ x 14³/₈
Purchase
SU 67.155

Nat Lowell
(South Riga, Latvia, 1880–)

Brooklyn Bridge, n.d.
Etching and drypoint
9³/₄ x 13¹/₄
Gift of Mr. H. M. Jalonack
SU 65.930

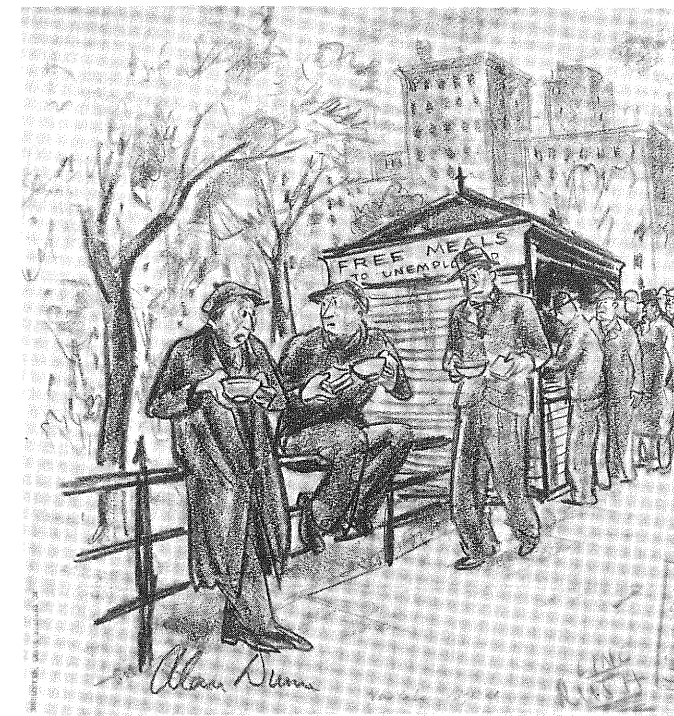


Fig. B3 Alan Dunn
“You can sense the change of mayors in the soup.”
Crayon
Printed in *The New Yorker Magazine*, October 1, 1932, p. 11
Gift of Ms. Mary Petty and Mr. Alan Dunn
SU 79.526

Manhattan Skyline, n.d.
Etching
8⁷/₈ x 13³/₁₆
Purchase
SU 84.481

Louis Lozowick
(South Russia, 1892–1973)

*Distant Manhattan From
Brooklyn*, 1937
Lithograph
7¹⁵/₁₆ x 13
Purchase
SU 86.74

Adriaan Lubbers
(Amsterdam, the Netherlands,
1892–1954)

South Ferry, 1929
Lithograph
14¹/₂ x 10³/₈
Gift of the Kennedy Gallery
SU 66.2543

Samuel L. Margolies
(Brooklyn, New York, 1897–)

Man’s Canyons, 1936
Aquatint and etching
11⁷/₈ x 8⁷/₈
Purchase
SU 71.561

Builders of Babylon, n.d.

Aquatint
14¹/₄ x 11
Gift of Mr. H. M. Jalonack
SU 65.948

Men of Steel, n.d.

Drypoint
14⁷/₈ x 11³/₄
Purchase
SU 66.309

John Marin
(Rutherford, New Jersey,
1875–1953)

Downtown, the El, 1921
Etching
6⁷/₈ x 8³/₄
Purchase
SU 87.79

Reginald Marsh
(Paris, France, 1898–1954)

Breadline, 1929
Etching
5 x 9
Purchase
SU 64.70

The Drillers, 1929
Etching
6⁷/₈ x 10⁷/₈
Purchase
SU 64.71

Skyline From Pier 10, Brooklyn, 1931
Etching
6³/₈ x 11⁷/₈
Purchase
SU 64.77

Dance Marathon, 1932
Engraving
6³/₄ x 5
Purchase
SU 64.89

Erie R.R. Locomotives Watering,
1934
Etching
8⁷/₈ x 11⁷/₈
Purchase
SU 64.81

The Jungle, 1934
Etching
7⁷/₈ x 11⁷/₈
Purchase
SU 64.80

Coney Island Beach, 1935
Etching
8⁷/₈ x 12
Purchase
SU 64.82

Coney Island, 1936
Tempera on panel
59³/₈ x 35³/₈
Purchase
SU 64.282

Minsky’s New Gotham Chorus, 1936
Etching
8⁷/₈ x 12
Purchase
SU 64.83

Wooden Horses, 1936
Etching
7⁷/₈ x 13¹/₄
Purchase
SU 64.84

Battery Belles, 1938
Etching and engraving
8⁷/₈ x 11⁷/₈
Purchase
SU 64.85

Coney Island Beach I, 1939
Etching
9³/₄ x 11⁷/₈
Purchase
SU 64.87

Jersey City Landscape, 1939
Etching and engraving
7 7/8 x 11 7/8
Purchase
SU 64.86

Kenneth Hayes Miller
(Oneida, New York, 1878–1952)

Shoppers, 1938
Etching
8 7/8 x 7

Gift of Harry Wickey
SU 66.2026

Women Shopping, 1938
Etching
5 3/16 x 6 5/8
Purchase
SU 87.89

C. R. W. Nevinson
(London, England, 1889–1946)

Temples of New York, c. 1919–20
Etching and drypoint
8 x 5 7/8
Purchase
SU 66.2553

Joseph Pennell
(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,
1860–1926)

The Woolworth Building, 1916
Etching
12 x 7 1/2
Gift of Mr. H. M. Jalonack
SU 65.956

Philip Reisman
(Warsaw, Poland, 1904–)

Jewish Fish Market, 1932
Oil on board
27 x 40
Gift of Mr. Harry and
Mrs. Maria Wickey
SU 66.479

Grant Reynard
(Grand Island, Nebraska,
1887–1967)

New York Central Local, n.d.
Watercolor
8 1/4 x 11 3/4
Gift of Cecilia B. Rother Estate
SU 70.84

Robert Riggs
(Decatur, Illinois, 1896–1970)

Pool, 1935
Lithograph
14 1/2 x 19 1/2
Gift of the Artist
SU 66.304

John Sloan
(Lock Haven, Pennsylvania,
1871–1951)

Gloucester Harbor, 1916
Oil on canvas
26 x 32
Purchase
SU 62.61

Arch Conspirators, 1917
Etching
4 1/4 x 6
Purchase
SU 67.160

Bandit's Cave, 1920
Etching
6 7/8 x 4 7/8
Purchase
SU 87.80

Moses Soyer
(Tombov, Russia, 1899–1975)

Men of the Waterfront, 1942
Oil on canvas
10 x 24
Gift of Mr. and Mrs.
Harry Schaeffer
SU 66.85

Harry Sternberg
(New York City, New York, 1904–)

Palisades Park, n.d.
Etching
7 13/16 x 9 7/8
Gift of Mr. Harry Wickey
SU 66.2767

Colton Waugh
(Cornwall, England, 1896–1973)

Five and Ten, 1935
Oil on canvas
36 3/4 x 30 1/2
Gift of the Artist
SU 68.124

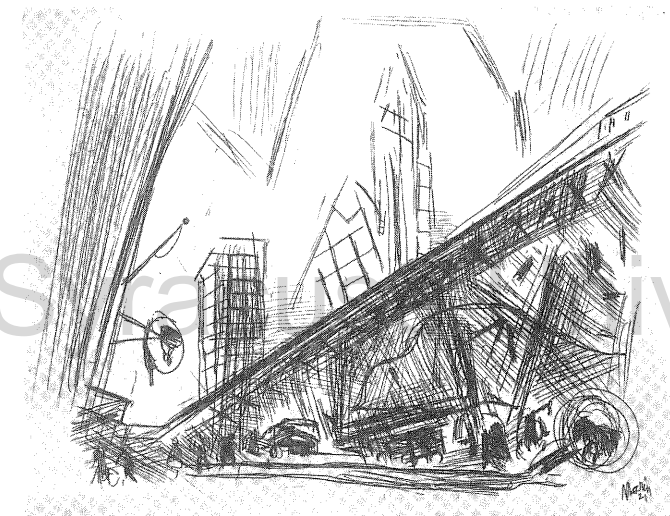


Fig. B4 John Marin
Downtown, the El, 1921
Etching
Purchase
SU 87.79

Harry Wickey
(Stryker, Ohio, 1892–1968)

Midsummer Night, 1922
Etching and drypoint
7 3/8 x 11 1/4
Gift of the Artist
SU 66.2443

Bryant Park, 1923
Etching and drypoint
6 7/8 x 6 13/16
Gift of the Artist
SU 66.2447

Ninth Avenue, 1923–1924
Drypoint
8 7/8 x 9 3/8
Gift of the Artist
SU 66.2453

The Jungle, 1926
Etching
7 3/8 x 11 3/8
Gift of the Artist
SU 66.2444

13. Wirth, pp. 61 and 66 f.

14. "Unemployment: 'No One Has Starved,'" *Fortune*, 6 (September 1932), p. 22.

15. Mumford, p. 480.

16. Mumford, p. 480.

17. John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925). The cinematic character of the novel was recognized by critics of the time, including Sinclair Lewis who lauded Dos Passos' work. See: Lewis, "Manhattan at Last!" *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 2 (December 5, 1925), 361; rpt. and expanded in Lewis, *John Dos Passos' 'Manhattan Transfer'* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1926), p. 6. Also see: Allen Tate, "Good Prose," 122 (February 10, 1926), p. 161. Dos Passos further developed his cinematic technique and urban themes in the trilogy, U.S.A., published in the Thirties.

18. Hart Crane, *The Bridge* (New York: Liveright, 1933).

19. Lewis was eventually to do limited pre-production work in Hollywood in 1947 for the writer and producer Dudley Nichols who was working on a screen adaptation of *Mourning Becomes Electra* for RKO Radio Pictures. See Paul McCarron, *Martin Lewis*, exh. cat. (New York: Kennedy Galleries, 1973), p. 7.

20. For a most interesting study of Marsh's view of gender and role, see: Marilyn Cohen, *Reginald Marsh's New York* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art in association with Dover Publications, Inc., 1983).

21. The theater, burlesque and movies attracted both Marsh and Bellows. The *New York Daily News* employed Marsh in 1922 to do drawings and provide ratings of vaudeville and burlesque acts. Performers wrote him seeking his attendance and approval. He did a number of works on the burlesque and the movies.

The pictorial drama which is so characteristic of Bellows' work, and typified by *Night Shadows*, may have stemmed, at least in part, from his long interest in the theater. For more on this subject, see Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist*, exh. cat., (New York: The Whitney Museum of Art in association with W. W. Norton and Company, 1980), pp. 52–58.

The first images of nickelodeons and the cinema in the American urban realist tradition were by John Sloan as early as 1905 (*Fun, One Center and Movies, Five Cents*). In this area, as in so many others, Bellows and Marsh benefited enormously by the example of Sloan's work.

22. Yeates and Garner, p. 21, Table 2.2.

23. Harold M. Mayer and Richard C. Wade, *Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 8–16, esp. p. 9, Fig. 4.

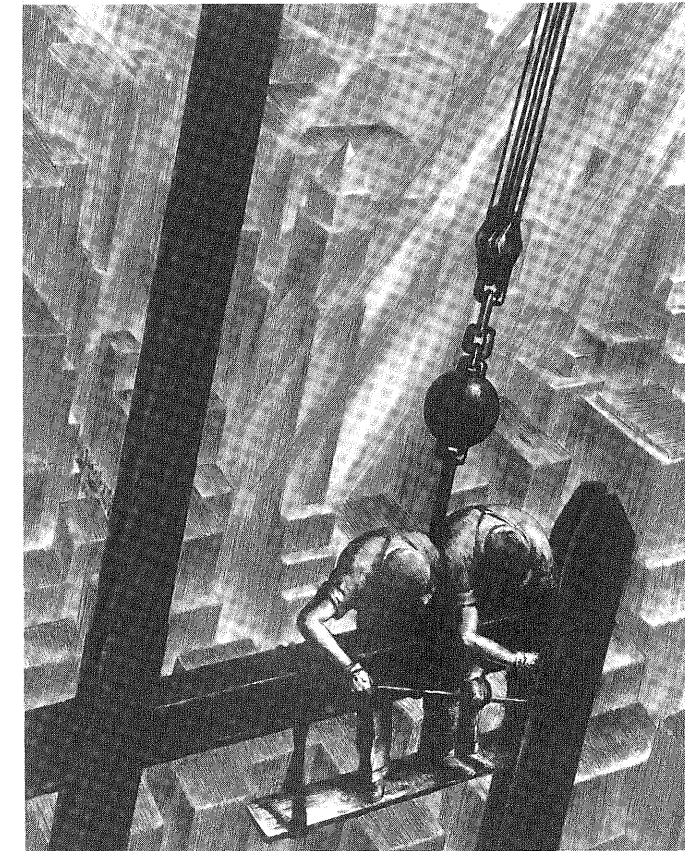
24. Anthony Sutcliffe, "Introduction: Urbanization, Planning and the Giant City," in *Metropolis*, ed. A. Sutcliffe (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984), p. 7, Table 1.1. For an examination

of the population growth of New York and its surrounding metropolitan area, see: Kenneth T. Jackson, "The Capital of Capitalism: the New York Metropolitan Region, 1890–1940," in *Metropolis*, pp. 319–353.

25. When confronted with the considerable stylistic problems posed by the skyscraper, many American architects turned for guidance to religious buildings. Pyramids, classical temples and campaniles were frequent sources of inspiration.

Yet it was the Gothic cathedral that was to provide true revelation. From Gilbert's Woolworth Building in New York (1913) to

Fig. A3 Samuel Margolies
Men of Steel, n.d.
Drypoint
Purchase
SU 66.309



cooperating personalities, events, groups, into more significant culminations.¹⁶

That vision, that understanding of the potential of the city articulated by Mumford in 1938, crystalized a major trend in American literature, poetry and art in the decades between the first and second world wars. The frustration and rage of Carol Kennicott in Lewis' *Main Street* was due, in part, to her perception of that awful gap between what a settlement of individuals might become and what it was all too often fated to be. That sense of the city as art and theater was expressed by John Dos Passos in his novel of the mid-Twenties, *Manhattan Transfer*, in which he used the stories of his various characters to create an almost cinematic portrait of the city.¹⁷ In quite a different manner, Hart Crane in his visionary epic of the Twenties, *The Bridge*, also saw the city both as a vast work of art and as an enormous theater.¹⁸

Many of the artists in this exhibition engaged the city in a manner anticipatory of Mumford's ideal. For Abbott, Bourke-White, Nat Lowell, Louis Lozowick, Adriaan Lubbers and John Marin, the city—that is Manhattan—was a vast, animated stage. Their images focus on the physicality of the city and its structures, rather than the lives of the people. They accomplish this task in various ways. In his 1921 etching, *Downtown, the El* (Fig. B4), John Marin reveals the nervous energy of the City almost as if the material structures of New York were a vast bell ringing out a cacophonous song of the Machine Age. In contrast, images of New York by Abbott and Lozowick are almost without sound. Their city scenes resemble freeze-frames in the movies, and we wait, watching for time once again to resume its normal pace.

Other artists in this exhibition have peopled their urban stage and focused on the play between prop and actor. Encouraged by the work of John Sloan, George Bellows and Edward Hopper, Martin Lewis developed a quietly dramatic style of light, shadow and mood, which enters the realm of the urban sublime in the 1929 print, *Glow of the City* (Fig. A2).¹⁹ Fascinated by movies and burlesque, Reginald Marsh in such works as *Dance Marathon* (1932), *Minsky's New Gotham Chorus* (1936) and *Wooden Horses* (1936), produced scenes in which men and women act out not only their individual roles, but even their biological destinies.²⁰ As the stage-like qualities of *Coney Island* (1936) or *Battery Belles* (1938) indicate, Marsh believed that the theater did not stop at the threshold of a dance-hall, stage or carousel, but extended into the streets and beyond.²¹

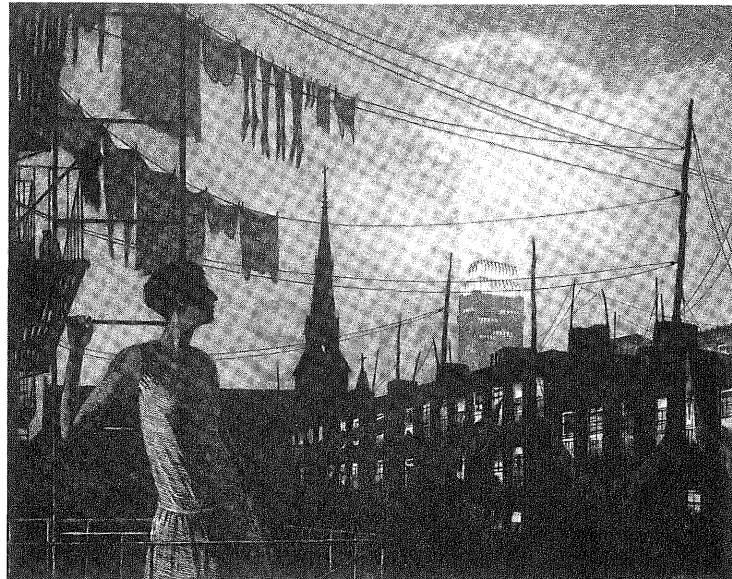


Fig. A2 Martin Lewis
Glow of the City, 1929
Drypoint
Purchase
SU 67.158

A more heroic vision, yet just as theatrical, is that found in the work of Samuel Margolies. His drama is located in the very construction of the theater of Manhattan. In such prints of the Thirties as *Builders of Babylon* and *Men of Steel* (Fig. A3), the workers on girders high above the labyrinth of city streets, have become Daedalus and Icarus reborn in the Machine Age.

The roots of the American urban explosion reached back to the period following the Civil War. The sheer number of American urban areas began to grow at a frenetic pace. For example, in 1870, 354 places in the United States had a population of at least 5000; in 1900, 905 places; in 1920, 1467 places; and by 1940, 2042 places.²² In seventy years the number of such places had increased by almost 600%. Another light on this explosive growth is cast by population figures for Chicago and New York. In 1830, Chicago was little more than a fort with a dozen small structures outside its walls.²³ By 1875, it had become one of the largest cities in the world with a population of 405,000. In 1925, the population within the city limits had grown to 3,564,000. The figures for New York are no less astonishing: 1825, 17,000 inhabitants; 1925, 7,774,000 inhabitants.²⁴

The unprecedented growth of American urban places, especially the larger cities, created enormous clashes as the past and present confronted each other. A sense of these great changes may be seen in comparing scenes of the skylines of American cities from the 1880s with those of the 1920s. In general, prior to the turn of the century church steeples were still a dominant feature of the urban silhouette. Yet by the second decade of the Twentieth Century the cathedrals of commerce dwarfed those of God and totally dominated the skylines of the central business districts. As American architects looked for an appropriate garb in which to dress the newly invented skyscraper, it was natural that many would turn to the styles of the cathedrals which their own buildings had so recently surpassed in height.²⁵ The English artist C. R. W. Nevinson was fascinated by just this process and recorded it in *Temples of New York* (c. 1919–20) as Berenice Abbott was to do little more than a decade later in such photographs as *St. Paul's Chapel, New York City* and *Trinity Church and Wall Street Towers* (1934) (Fig. A1).

An often overlooked factor which surely contributed to this historicism was the Brooklyn Bridge, an urban symbol of America's technological prowess. Spanning the East River, the Bridge not only brought Brooklyn and Manhattan

together, but with its Gothic towers of stone and cables of steel, it symbolized for generations of writers and artists a threshold joining the past and present. Hart Crane's *Bridge* is only the most notable of a series of writings inspired by the structure. Likewise, John Taylor Arms' *Cobwebs* (c. 1920) (Fig. B1) and Nat Lowell's *Brooklyn Bridge* (n.d.), are but two of scores of images devoted to this great monument. In America between the wars, the metropolises appeared to dominate the cities; the cities appeared to dominate the towns and the towns appeared to dominate the villages. Yet the relationship between the large city and the small communities of this nation, as exemplified by *Gloucester Harbor* (1916) by John Sloan, *Coaldale* (1939) (Fig. B2) by Hugh Botts or *Edge of Town* (1938) by Thomas Hart Benton, was never a one-way path. The growth of the cities was very much tied to more efficient and increased production of commodities and too, by the flow of people off the land. The Coal- dales, Winesburgs, and Gopher Prairies existed in symbiosis with Chicago and New York.

In one of her more reflective moments, the heroine of *Main Street*, Carol Kennicott, declared:

I've learned that Gopher Prairie isn't just an eruption on the prairie, as I thought first, but as large as New York. In New York I wouldn't know more than forty or fifty people, and I know that many here.²⁶

In a limited sense, she was correct. Her circle of friends might not be any larger in either locale; yet surely her potential web of contacts would be infinitely larger in Minneapolis-St. Paul or New York, and this difference in scale is a critical factor in differentiating between the village or small town and New York. It is also precisely this difference in scale which separated New York from all other large cities in the country.

In his book, *Thus Far* (1940), the artist Harry Wickey, whose gifts to the University form such an important part of this exhibition, neatly defined what for many people in the decades between the wars was the abyss distancing New York from the rest of America. Wickey, who had lived in a very small town in northern Ohio as a child, moved to Detroit and then to Chicago and was therefore "accustomed to 'big city life.'" Yet he wrote:

I was not too confident when it came to venturing forth in the great eastern metropolis. The proportion of things and the general tempo of life in New York City were simply "terrific" according to friends of mine who had been East and had lived to tell the tale. They had informed me that Chicago and Detroit were "jerk water towns" by comparison and I would have to be on guard constantly in order to survive.²⁷

From the true "jerk water towns" of 2500 to the vast Metropolis of millions, this exhibition documents the marvelous variety of the American urban image from World War I to World War II found in the extraordinary holdings of Syracuse University and housed in the University Art Collection, the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections and the E. S. Bird Library.

Dr. Edward A. Aiken
Director, Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery
Chair, Graduate Program in Museum Studies

1. Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Tyranny of the Skyscraper," from *Modern Architecture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931); excerpted in *Creative Art*, 8 (May 1931), pp. 324–332.

2. The U.S. Bureau of the Census modified its definition in 1950. For a discussion of the U.S. Census Bureau definition, see Donald J. Bogue, "Urbanism in the United States, 1950," in *Cities and Society*, eds. Paul K. Hatt and Albert Reiss, Jr. (New York: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 84–91. For census purposes, definitions of urban vary from country to country. For example, in Canada a place must have at least 1000 inhabitants, whereas in Japan the number is 10,000; see Maurice Yeates and Barry Garner, *The North American City* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), pp. 19–26. As might be expected, dissatisfaction with describing the concept of "urban" in terms of number alone is widespread. The social science literature on the subject is vast. In terms of some of the themes underlying this exhibition, one particularly interesting volume is *Cities of the Mind; Images and Themes of the City in the Social Sciences*, eds. Lloyd Rodwin and Robert M. Hollister (New York: Plenum Press, 1984).

3. Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1920).

4. Lewis, pp. 32–40.

5. Lewis, p. 39.

6. Lewis, p. 34.

7. Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919; rpt. New York: Penguin, 1976).

8. Although *Main Street* and *Winesburg* are novels about life in small towns, the larger world of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Chicago, Cleveland and New York is never excluded. In his subsequent novel, *Babbitt* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), Lewis made the huge urban center of Zenith the backdrop of the narrative. *Winesburg* is much more a collection of short stories, than a novel in the usual sense. The chapter, "Loneliness," pp. 167–178, is a story about life in New York City.

9. There is a considerable literature on the differences and similarities between "the urban" and "the rural." See, for example, Otis Dudley Duncan, "Community Size and the Rural-Urban Continuum," in *Cities and Society*, pp. 35–45.

10. Berenice Abbott, with text by Elizabeth McCausland, *Changing New York* (New York, 1939; rpt. Dover Publications Inc. under the title, *New York in the Thirties*, 1967.)

11. Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 44 (July 1938); rpt. in *Neighborhood, City, and Metropolis*, eds. Robert Gutman and David Popenoe (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 54–69 and Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938).

12. Wirth, p. 58.

Howell and Hood's Chicago Tribune Tower (1924) the Gothic skyscraper excited the American business community and general public. As late as 1931, Cross and Cross used a Gothic-Art Deco mélange in the General Electric Building in New York.

Inspired by the Woolworth Building, the Reverend S. Parker Cadman described Gilbert's Gothic monument as a "cathedral of commerce," and the company used his phrase as the title for a 1917 brochure. John Taylor Arms, who specialized in images of European cathedrals, did an etching of the Woolworth Building in 1921 and titled it, *An American Cathedral*.

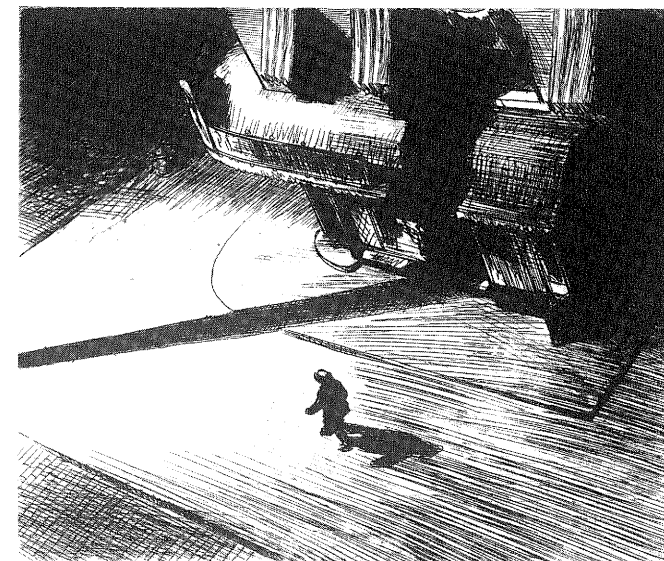
For an article from the period which is critical of the use of historic, religious styles for skyscrapers, see: Philip N. Youtz, "American Architecture Emerges from the Stone Age," *Creative Art*, 10 (1932), 16-21. An interesting account of the Gothic skyscraper may be found in: Paul Goldberger, *The Skyscraper* (New York: Knopf, 1985), pp. 44-47, 53, 60-63 and 72f.

26. Lewis, p. 269.

27. Harry Wickey, *Thus Far* (New York: American Artists Group, Inc., 1941), p. 42.

Syracuse University Art Galleries

Fig. A4 Edward Hopper
Night Shadows, 1921
Etching
6⁷/₈ x 8¹/₈
Purchase
SU 87.78



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This exhibition has been developed in the spirit of collaboration with students enrolled in the courses on curatorship presented in the Spring and Autumn semesters of 1987 in the Graduate Program in Museum Studies, School of Art, Syracuse University. In particular, I would like to thank Kelly Blythin, Susan Dillon, Kate Dobbs, Patricia Eischen, Edward Gokey, Jeneanne Hunter, Robin Steiner, Jessica Stern, Tran Turner, Theodore Turgeon, Barbara Ward and Connie Y. J. Yeh for their unflagging interest and dedication.

Recognizing the potential of this exhibition, the Syracuse University Senate Committee on Research generously awarded Dr. Edward A. Aiken a grant for research and travel expenses. With the greatest kindness, Ms. Lee Ullmann Fenner, Potsdam, New York, donated funds to help make this publication possible.

We are greatly indebted to Dr. Alfred Collette, Director of the Syracuse University Art Collection, and Mr. Domenic Iacono, Curator of the Syracuse University Art Collection, for their generous support. Mr. David Prince, Curator of the Syracuse University Art Collection, and Mr. Dean Griff, Preparator of the Syracuse University Art Collection, gave unstintingly of their time and energy. We have benefited greatly by the advice and help of Ms. Amy S. Doherty, Librarian, George Arents Research Library, and Mr. Randall I. Bond, Associate Librarian, Fine Arts Department, E. S. Bird Library. Mr. Larry David Perkins, Registrar and Preparator of the Lowe Gallery, and Ms. Betty LaPlante, Office Coordinator of the Lowe Gallery, assisted along the entire path of exhibition development and installation. Prof. Donald M. Lantzy, Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, and Prof. Rodger Mack, Director of the School of Art, have supported this exhibition from the very beginning.

To all the individuals who have helped to make the exhibition possible we express our deep gratitude.

Dr. Edward A. Aiken
Director, Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery
Chair, Graduate Program in Museum Studies