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NEW DEAL PRINTMAKING: POLITICS AND PROTEST

By:

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B.A. Hanover College, 2006

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Fine Arts
University of Louisville
Louisville, KY

May 2010

NEW DEAL PRINTMAKING:
POLITICS AND PROTEST

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A Thesis Approved on

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by the following Thesis Committee:

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ABSTRACT

NEW DEAL PRINTMAKING: POLITICS AND PROTEST

Andrew J. Hardin

April 15, 2010

This thesis project exhibition brought together Works Progress Administration prints from the University of Louisville collection, as well as the University of Kentucky Art Museum and Murray State University. The thirty-three works were intentionally selected based on their societal commentary and political quality. The exhibition looks at the connection between the artist's political ideologies and the social commentary of their artwork. The thesis explores how the artists were able to organize and protest for the right to have funding for the Federal Art Project. The thesis considers the contribution the printmakers made to the American art scene, including the developments of screen printing and color lithography as fine art mediums.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
HISTORY OF THE WPA/FAP.....	3
STUGGLE AND SOLIDARITY.....	9
POLITICS EXPRESSED.....	14
CREATING AN EXHIBITION.....	20
CONCLUSION.....	33
REFERENCES.....	35
APPENDIX.....	37
<i>1. EXHIBITON WALL TEXT.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>2. ARTIST LABELS.....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>3. BROCHURE.....</i>	<i>73</i>
<i>4. EXHIBITION ANNOUCEMENT.....</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>REFERENCES.....</i>	<i>75</i>
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	77
CURICULUM VITAE.....	79

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Ida Abelman, <i>Countryside</i> , 1939, Color woodcut.....	39
2. Harold Anchel, <i>Sickbed</i> , 1937, Lithograph.....	41
3. Ernest Fiene, <i>Steel Workers Family</i> , 1936, Charcoal and watercolor.....	42
4. Boris Gorelick, <i>Case No. xx</i> , Lithograph.....	43
5. Harry Gottlieb, <i>Makers of Steel</i> , 1939, Color lithograph.....	44
6. Harry Gottlieb, <i>Minor Repairs</i> , 1937, Lithograph.....	45
7. Blanche Grambs, <i>Coal Heap</i> , 1938, Color lithograph.....	46
8. Blanche Grambs, <i>Workers Homes</i> , Etching and aquatint.....	47
9. Nils Gren, <i>Silent Men</i> , 1936, Lithograph.....	48
10. Chet La More, <i>Non Combatants</i> , Lithograph.....	49
11. Chet La More, <i>Resting</i> , Lithograph.....	50
12. Chet La More, <i>Unemployed</i> , Silkscreen.....	51
13. Joseph Leboit, <i>Derby Winner</i> , Lithograph.....	52
14. Joseph Leboit, <i>Madonna and Child</i> , Etching and aquatint.....	53
15. Joseph Leboit, <i>Society Burial</i> , Etching and aquatint.....	54
16. Margaret Lowengrund, <i>Brick Factory</i> , 1937, Lithograph.....	55
17. Clara Mahl, <i>An American Family</i> , Etching.....	56
18. Elizabeth Olds, <i>Blast Furnace</i> , Lithograph.....	57
19. Elizabeth Olds, <i>Mending Nets</i> , Color wood engraving.....	58

20. Frank Ominsky, <i>Done In</i> , Etching.....	59
21. Betty Parish, <i>Bedford Street</i> , 1937, Etching.....	60
22. Theodore Polos, <i>Street Fight</i> , Lithograph.....	61
23. Harry Rein, <i>Competition</i> , Woodcut.....	62
24. William Sanger, <i>Share Croppers Family</i> , Drypoint.....	63
25. Harry Shokler, <i>Gloucester Wharf</i> , 1937, Etching.....	64
26. Charles Surendorf, <i>Skid Row</i> , Wood engraving.....	65
27. Adrian Troy, <i>Freedman's Holdings</i> , Engraving.....	66
28. Adrian Troy, <i>Tarring</i> , Linocut.....	67
29. Hyman Warsager, <i>Manhattan Night</i> , Etching and aquatint.....	68
30. Albert James Webb, <i>Parlor Statesman</i> , 1936, Etching.....	69
31. Albert James Webb, <i>The Moon and Sixpence</i> , Drypoint.....	70
32. Ted Witonski, <i>Apres l'Opera</i> , Etching.....	71
33. Lloyd William Wulf, <i>Man in the Street</i> , Lithograph.....	72

INTRODUCTION

Within the University of Louisville print collection are a group of prints from the 1930s. These prints are on permanent loan from the federal government. The research and study of these fascinating prints, learning of their origin and connection with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) fed a passion and led to the curating of *New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest*.

My personal knowledge of the WPA was initially limited. My familiarity was mostly through the work programs, and with the documentary photography and murals that were associated with the project. The sculpture, easel paintings, print making and other arts that were done alongside the other New Deal projects were a mystery.

The images found in this collection of prints range from portraits, still-lives, landscapes and the “American Scene” as was encouraged by the WPA Federal Art Project (FAP). However the WPA prints that personally encouraged me further attention and study were the works that depicted societal issues. The scenes of workers, violence, and poverty capture in images the political ideologies of many of the artists who produced them.

Many of these artists fought for the rights of the artist, including the right to be funded. To achieve this they organized and protested, utilizing the Artists Union. Some were arrested, among those arrested included artists in this exhibition such as Blanche Grambs and Ida Abelman. The WPA artist's passion and dedication to their cause was inspiring to me in the curating of the exhibition.

The research on the art, the artists, and the WPA led to the exhibition, *New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest*. The exhibition, held in the Hite Art Institute Gallery X, included thirty-three artworks by twenty-four artists. The goal of this thesis exhibition project is to bring attention to the significance of these WPA prints in Kentucky university collections, as well as to explore how the selected artists of the WPA expressed and explored societal and political concerns.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF THE WPA/FAP

The establishment of the graphic division of the WPA/FAP in that memorable fall of 1935 injected new hope into the artist and new life into the print. It gave the artist an income, though meager; it placed him in direct contact with an audience, and, more important, by providing facilities it enabled him to experiment freely in his search for a more adequate technique. Prior to this, prohibitive costs of equipment and printing made it impossible for the graphic artist to work in color lithography or color woodblock.(Warsager 139)

This quote from Hyman Warsager, WPA/FAP artist included in this exhibition, expresses the significance and importance of the WPA/FAP. Warsager captured with this statement what the Project meant for the artist and for the development of American printmaking.

The Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP) began in 1935 under the leadership of the National Director Holger Cahill. This exhibition, *New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest* deals with prints produced under the Graphic Arts Division. Other divisions focused on murals, easel painting and sculpture; and under the WPA/FAP was the Index of American Design, posters, and community art centers. The WPA/FAP was not the only federally sponsored art project during this time, but it is the project that led to the production of the artworks in this exhibition.

Printmaking was rather limited in the United States up until 1935. Etching was the major medium, and was the only method of printmaking generally exhibited, according to FAP printmaker Jacob Kainen who went on to be Curator of Prints at the Smithsonian Institution. He described printmaking in this country at the start of the program as “dominated by conservative artists who were concerned mainly with conspicuous

technical competence, in the illustrative sense, at the expense of more expressive values”(Kainen 155). In looking through the works of the exhibition, it becomes clear that etching was no longer the only acceptable print medium after the start of the program.

Artists were struggling along with the rest of the nation during the Great Depression. The government turned the hardship into an opportunity to employ artists with a mission of bringing art to the people. At the time the United States art market was centered in New York City. This program expanded the production of art throughout the country. Developments in printmaking were produced in screen printing and color lithography became a fine art medium.

On February 6, 1936 the first government sponsored graphic arts workshop opened in New York City. To follow would be sixteen workshops across the country. The artists in these studios were producing prints in a variety of methods, generally in editions of around 25, with an additional three proofs for the artist. The artists were expected to produce one edition a month, and this work had to be approved by supervisors.

The supervisors were typically artists themselves, employed to oversee the work-relief artists. The supervisors were generally on the side of the artists, even unionizing, and the supervisors and artists often took issue with the government administrators of the WPA/FAP in Washington when budgets were cut, firings occurred, or needs were not met (Smith 257-58). The WPA/FAP had problems, but also expanded American art in a time of economic depression.

During the WPA/FAP, 239,727 impressions of 12,581 original images were produced by the Graphic Arts Division. Of the total impressions, 36,571 with 1,840 original images came from New York City by November 30, 1938 (Kainen, 170). Given

these numbers, around 15% of the impressions and originals were produced in New York City, a substantial amount given that fifteen other workshops were in operation across the country. This helps to explain why such a large number of prints in the exhibition come from the New York City workshop, identified by a stamp located on the prints.

As World War II drew near the project began to wain, and focused on the war effort. The Graphics Arts Division was renamed the Graphic Section of the War Services Division in 1942; however by 1943 this project was ended. The artworks produced by the WPA/FAP were distributed to a variety of public institutions across the country in the early 1940s. This is how these works came to the collection of the University of Louisville, as well as the University of Kentucky Art Museum and Murray State University, from which works were borrowed for this exhibition.

The government sponsorship allowed for the development of color lithography beginning in 1937. Two color lithographs are on display in this exhibition. The cost of color printing had prevented many artists from pursuing this color medium earlier. In 1938 a silkscreen unit was set up in New York City with Anthony Velonis as the head of the unit. Six artists were chosen to be a part of the unit, three of which are represented in this exhibition: Elizabeth Olds, Harry Gottlieb, and Hyman Warsanger. However, none of their silkscreen prints, or serigraphs as they are also known, are on display. There is one serigraph in the exhibition, *Unemployed* by Chet La More who later worked on the silkscreen unit.

For the WPA artists, the expansion of media and ability to work with skilled artists, influenced the development of American art in the following decades. The FAP hired trained artists to instruct in the program as non-relief workers, such as Harry Gottlieb who was hired to teach lithography. The artists in the program had the

opportunity to study many forms of printing techniques that had previously been unavailable. Kainen points out that after the project these skilled printers “joined the staffs of schools and universities which increasingly added printmaking departments” where “for the first time in the history of American graphic arts, students found a large number of instructors who practiced and welcomed fresh approaches” (Kainen 175).

Not only did the project expose artists to a variety of printmaking media, but exposed the public to this art form as well. Kainen explained in his essay that the Project allowed for prints to be accessible to the public, “no longer the rare and inaccessible” or “stuffy and tiresome,” but that prints were “imaginative,” “original” and affordable (Kainen 175). Previously most Americans exposure to prints was in the form of reproductions of artworks and commercial printmaking, particularly Currier and Ives.

The artists, as work relief employees had some difficulties with the administration. Kainen had mixed feeling about the experience of the Project, as did many artists, wishing he had taken more chances, but felt the government control held too many restrictions. Kainen criticizes the Project as keeping the artists “from fruitful production” although credits the Project with the “rapid” and “far-reaching” advances in American art after the Project (Kainen 173). Kainen found “work on the Project was exciting and stimulating,” but political tensions led to the artists need “to fight not only for reasonable working conditions but also for our economic existence”(Kainen 162). This eventually resulted in the implementation of routine firings of artists in 1936. In 1939 a policy of firing WPA artists after 18 months began. Non citizens, especially Chinese and Japanese immigrants were targeted according to Jacob Kainen. The government's argument for implementing these firings was to encourage finding other work, but for an artist nothing compared to the opportunity of the WPA/FAP. Artists

could reapply but were forced to start the process of joining the WPA/FAP over. First they would need to confirm their economic need and wait in the home relief center, a WPA office where all WPA work opportunities would be posted. A dedicated artist would pass up other work opportunities for an opening to be an artist in the FAP. The artist would then race the other eager artists to the workshop. The first artist to arrive typically got the job (Kainen 164).

Although the Project had its problems and limitations, the artists were able to develop new techniques, such as Chet La More's serigraph *Unemployed* or Harry Gottlieb's color lithograph *Makers of Steel*. FAP artists were also able to sustain themselves financially as artists through the Great Depression. Without the WPA/FAP many artists would have likely been forced to give up art in pursuit of other work. Taken all together, the WPA/FAP, not only sustained artists and built their careers, but also supplied the country with a multitude of significant artistic accomplishments: prints, new methods of printmaking, trained artists for universities, and increased public interest in prints.

The prints, and other artworks were shown in public exhibitions. A motorized caravan, a refitted army ambulance, traveled around exhibiting outside in public venues with lectures. The art caravan expanded and encouraged public interest in art, with visitors noting in ballot boxes their desire for public art activities in their community as well as voting on their favorite works in the exhibition (Ludins 232-33). Art was also brought to the people through exhibitions at Project Galleries, WPA Community Art Centers as well as museum exhibitions throughout the country, bringing together the art of new artists and well known artists who were a part of the WPA/FAP (Morsell 229-31). Some of the artists in this exhibition, such as Elizabeth Olds and Ida

Abelman traveled the country in creating exhibitions and bringing art to the people.

CHAPTER II

STUGGLE AND SOLIDARITY

This project began in January 2009 by working with John Begley and Dr. Dario Covi on photographing the work in the University of Louisville collection and updating the collection database. In this process the Works Progress Administration artworks in the collection were some of the first images entered into the database. The works were captivating.

As stated previously, my personal experience with the WPA was limited. The WPA had been covered in history classes. Additionally, I did research while working with the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center touched on the WPA slave narrative interviews. However, the depth of the government projects geared toward art were not familiar to me. Upon looking through the works on paper from the Federal Art Project in the University of Louisville collection research soon after began.

Research began on the WPA and the Depression Era in general during the early spring of 2009. The focus narrowed to the Federal Art Project, and more specifically the Graphic Arts Division, of which resulted in this exhibition. This thesis will go into more detail on the findings of this research, and its impact on the exhibition later.

Before going into this detail, however, this section will explain the passion felt for this topic, and how personal experiences have led up to this interest. An exploration of one's connection and passion for art is important in being a curator. In this case, life experiences as they relate to a significant portion of the prints in this collection.

The idea of human struggle has been a common interest of mine. My childhood was always filled with the storytelling of my grandfather, whose childhood was spent in the Great Depression, and then as a young adult he went to Europe as a soldier in World War II. These stories of hardship and war built my interest and led to later research more about this era.

As an undergraduate at Hanover College the following classes built upon the study of human struggle: “Theology and Human Suffering,” “Nazi Germany,” “The World in 1968.” These classes, and others, built upon the previously discussed understanding and interest in human struggle.

A year was spent with Americorps VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America), whose mission is to fight poverty, specifically with the American Red Cross Disaster Services in Louisville, KY. A year was spent educating the community on disaster preparedness and responding to a number of local disasters, assisting people all over the city who had been displaced from their homes due to fire, flood, and even a train derailment. This was hands on experience dealing with human struggle and helping to alleviate problematic conditions.

This Americorps program led to the participation of a second year in another program, Public Allies Cincinnati, Ohio, a program which focused on developing leadership and diversity. As a Public Ally, I spent time working with the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio and also worked on many other community, non-profit projects. At the Freedom Center work was primarily in the Interpretive Services Department, and assisting in the Education Department and the Exhibitions Department. Researching the struggle for freedom and communicating this to the public was an experience that led to a desire for a career in museums and led to

involvement in the Critical and Curatorial program at the University of Louisville.

All of these experiences helped reinforce this interest in human struggle, and ultimately led to this exhibition, *New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest*. These artworks succinctly and graphically presented the idea of human struggle. There was the struggle of poverty, both of the artist and the people depicted. There was struggle against fascists, with WPA artists joining such anti-fascist groups as the American Artists Congress. There was struggle with the government to maintain funding, a cause taken on by the Artists Union. All of these stories are contained in these prints.

Americorps is a federally sponsored program and presented certain challenges. The experience gained was mainly with human interaction and education, and this did not always convert well into quantifiable data to enter into forms that the program demanded. Curiously, the programs had strict rules about not being politically active during service.

These experiences and interests seemed to be encompassed by these works and the idea for an exhibition began to be formed. Initially the idea was to focus on the working class as a subject matter, but this idea grew. The idea evolved, and became more focused. The process involved narrowing down the more than ninety prints from the University of Louisville collection to the select few that dealt with issues of politics and protest.

In studying the images in the University of Louisville collection it became clear that the exhibition could be more focused if other collections were sought out. Research soon located collections of WPA/FAP prints at Murray State University and the University of Kentucky Art Museum. The universities agreed to loan a few works from their collections. .

The themes presented in the artworks seemed connected, but a title that would

bring the ideas together into a cohesive show had yet to develop. It was on one of the long trips between Murray and Louisville that the title struck me. The title was written down at a gas station in a small town somewhere in western Kentucky. The words “New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest” were written down into the notepad.

This title summed up the exhibition very well. “New Deal” informed the audience of the time and place, and given the contemporary discussions of comparing the current president Barack Obama to Franklin D. Roosevelt the words “New Deal” were once again fresh in the public mind. The words “New Deal” also reinforced the idea of the fresh start the artists were given in regards to printmaking, so “New Deal Printmaking” was chosen as the main title.

The second part of the title, “Politics and Protest,” captured the mood of the artists. “Politics” reinforced the notion that the WPA/FAP was a federally sponsored program, and therefore came with all the political baggage of politicians arguing over the funding and how the money should be spent and who and what it should be spent on. This political threat pushed the artists to get political themselves, forming unions and finding ways to represent themselves.

“Protest” followed the politics. The artists were forced to go to the streets on numerous occasions to fight for their funding and the continuation of the program. The word “Protest” also refers to the themes the artists depicted. The works in this exhibition can be seen as works of protest, either criticizing society or celebrating the worker. Many of the artists were sending a message to the viewer about the state of the nation and evoking an emotional response from the viewer. The word protest brought together all the themes the exhibition was trying to express.

The majority of visitors would be from the campus community, primarily

associated with the art department in some way. However, this exhibition was specific to a particular time in history, and to printmaking, so it was important to provide context to students. The exhibition text was written clearly, and defined terms when appropriate. The labels remained short and information was spread throughout the labels. The text was edited down to be focused and specific, and tried to leave much of the interpretations of each work up to the viewer, instead providing more background on the artist in the labels.

Evidence was gathered in determining the success of the exhibition as approachable and engaging by speaking with a variety of visitors with varying levels of art knowledge. People with an art background enjoyed the exhibition and felt they had learned something new; and when people with no art background were able to find the exhibition both interesting and not overwhelming with text and unfamiliar terms, the exhibition the exhibition was a success.

The process of producing this exhibition has been an enjoyable one and the research has prompted ideas for other exhibitions. There are particular artists, found through research on the project, who would be candidates for exhibitions, either retrospective shows or ones with focused time with the WPA/FAP. Another idea is to focus on an exhibition of works by non-citizens who worked in the WPA/FAP, and their contribution to the American art scene. Other ideas include looking more specifically at such issues as race and gender in the WPA/FAP. Larger exhibitions could explore the WPA/FAP impact on printmaking in twentieth century America.

CHAPTER III

POLITICS EXPRESSED

The state of financial depression has always been the habitat of artists. They know the geography of that state. But with gaunt specters of war, depression, and oppression stalking the world, they began to realize that, like other workers, they must stand together to save themselves. Art has turned militant. It forms unions, carries banners, sits down uninvited, and gets underfoot. Social justice is its battle cry. War, dictators, labor troubles, housing problems all appear on canvas and paper (Dwight 152).

This bold quote from Mabel Dwight, a printmaker who worked in the WPA/FAP in New York, captures the spirit of many of the artworks and artists on display in the exhibition, *New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest*. Although she is not represented in this exhibition, she would have known many of the artists, working with them in the New York workshop. In looking through the prints in the exhibition, social justice is a common thread, the works are political commentary that call for reform and bring the above mentioned issues to public attention.

Because of the social reform aspect of many of the prints and other artworks of the time, many art historians adopted the phrase “social realism” to describe the works. Art Historian Helen Langa argues that the term “social viewpoint art” should be used over “social realism” borrowing the term from the 1930s because the term realism excludes many of the socially charged prints that do not fit within those perimeters, and also “because it emphasizes the centrality of artists' political and intellectual perspectives in shaping works that were intended to convey complex social analyses” (Langa 6).

The works selected for this exhibition touch on such issues as poverty, labor, war and violence. Printmaking, of all the arts, has the unique ability to produce multiple

originals, this quality attracted many artists who were “politically and socially engaged” (Doss 251-52). The multiple originals allowed for artists to spread a message throughout society. The prints can be easily transported. Murals were another popular mode of communicating radical ideas during this period; however, the mural was limited to one public location. Prints could be distributed across the Nation.

During the 19th century popular print societies developed, emphasizing technique detail and line work in etching. The idea of using prints to communicate a message was lost. The artists of this exhibition revitalized the notion of prints carrying a message. Eichenberg looked back to the origins of printmaking, specifically the wood block. He saw the wood block as “the most democratic medium of art,” accessible to large groups of people and having “always been the carrier of a message” (Eichenberg 148). He saw the potential to use printmaking as a way to communicate.

In looking through the collections of WPA/FAP works at the University of Louisville, Murray State University and the University of Kentucky Art Museum, many of the works were not politically engaged images. Jacob Kainen, a WPA/FAP printmaker, had much criticism for many of the WPA printmakers describing them as “uninformed, unadventurous, routine practitioners” not progressing beyond the print societies of the 19th century (Kainen 166). This assessment may hold some weight in regards to many of the printmakers. However, in researching the artists of this exhibition, many of the artists on display experimented greatly in their work, especially in regards to printmaking methods such as, serigraphy, color printing, and lithography as is documented in the artist label text in the exhibition.

In addition, in reading through the artist biographies, another trend soon becomes clear, namely, that the artists represented in the exhibition were politically engaged,

joining radical art organizations and frequently protesting. Helen Langa explained how “many artists marched or organized for social change... (and a few depicted these turbulent issues in their works” (Langa 10). This exhibition brings together WPA prints which did explore and refer to political issues. It should be noted that these works were in the minority in the three university collections, however the University of Louisville did seem to carry a bulk of these images. Although the presence may be small, it is a significant minority of images. These artists were willing to approach issues of poverty and homelessness, race, violence and war, class, and gender in these artworks funded by the federal government. This was a daring move given that funding was at risk, and after 1938 a loyalty oath was required, because of a fear of communist influences.

Elizabeth Olds, one artist represented in this exhibition, was politically radical, a talented artist, and socially conscious. She was the antithesis of the artist Kainen criticized. In the 1930s Olds wrote an essay, a call to expand the WPA/FAP and use printmaking to truly bring art to the people by producing thousands of prints at low cost. She suggested providing prints to public housing and to make prints available for borrowing in public libraries. Olds explains how the art market limits artists to produce only what patrons will buy, but the WPA/FAP allowed artists to explore subjects freely. Olds argues that prints were the key to bringing art to the people, a goal of the WPA/FAP. Olds presents the idea that prints should be made in the thousands, not in small editions of 25, as was standard in the Graphic Arts Division. Olds expressed frustration, suggesting the American public “should be able to pick up a lithograph, etching, or woodcut and know what it is about. Actually, he is culturally illiterate, because the language of art is a closed book to him, a speech which he has not been taught and of which he has been deprived” (Olds 143-44) This idea was never realized.

Olds, and many other artists of the WPA/FAP, identified with the worker. Printmaking is a very labor intensive process, using a number of tools, chemicals, and equipment. This, coupled with printmaking's production of multiples, helps to explain how the printmakers were able to readily identify with the worker. Erika Doss, in an article that explored depictions of labor in Depression Era art, adds to this idea of shared identity. She writes, "almost one-third of the artists who worked on New Deal art projects were from working-class backgrounds" strengthening the ties between culture and industry in terms of "product and production" (Doss 235). Doss, later went on to add that artists were encouraged to see themselves in terms of industry. Ralph Pearson, an artist and arts organizer, promoted the idea of printmakers to view themselves as "a workman among workers" (Doss 253).

Other artists also held this idea to be true. Fritz Eichenberg wrote an essay called "Eulogy on the Woodblock." This essay described the historical significance of the woodblock as a "democratic" art that carries a message. He instructed artists to "live among his people." (Eichenberg 148, 50) The artworks selected for this exhibition depict these ideas with images of laborers and the social issues of the day.

In this exhibition several artists depicted the worker at work as a subject matter. The works by Elizabeth Olds and Harry Gottlieb all depict laborers. Joseph Leboit's *Society Burial* shows two men shoveling in the background. Adrian Troy shows men at work in his linocut *Tarring* and Margaret Lowengrund's *Brick Factory* shows men at work as well, with both of these prints also show a racially integrated workforce, a controversial topic at the time.

Doss argues that depictions of the working class men were "idealized icons" and goes on to argue that these images objectify the male worker (Doss 254). The laborers are

shown as heroic and sometimes muscular, and in the case of Leboit in a style similar to Diego Rivera's workers. According to Kainen, "Chet LaMore, Harry Gottlieb, Blanches [sic] Grambs, and Elizabeth Olds, showed a kinship with Orozco," the Mexican muralist (Kainen 167). This further indicated that the artists were influenced by politically radical, leftist artists.

It is worth noting that in the case above all the workers are men. During this period, women were not expected to work by societal norms. However, given that in this exhibition, six of the twenty-four artists are female, and eight of the thirty-three works are by female artists, women were working. In the WPA/FAP Graphic Arts Division as many as one-third of the artists were female, but in exhibitions women were generally represented in fewer numbers (Langa 216-17). Although women were not represented in equal numbers as men in the program and exhibitions, WPA/FAP artist Riva Helfond stated in a panel discussion that "there was no discrimination," going on to say women were paid the same and received the same raises as men (Stephen Neil Greengard 57). Langa recognizes this stance, but suggests that while leaps forward were made during this period in regards to racial and gender biases, the progress was limited and "still shaped by entrenched cultural stereotypes (Langa 219). To add to this argument, all the female figures depicted in this exhibition are by male artists, and typically show the woman as mother in a family setting. The specific works will be discussed in another chapter.

The WPA claimed to have no discrimination policies in regard to race, and even hired non-citizens. A majority of the artists in this exhibition were immigrants, or first generation Americans. Although the project allowed for anyone to apply "very few African Americans or Asian Americans gained positions on the WPA-FAP" (Langa 22-23). However, the FAP did hire African Americans, such as Adrian Troy, receiving the

same pay as their white colleagues, however placement policies typically created a segregated work environment (Langa 133). As mentioned previously, both Troy and Lowengrund depicted racial integration in this exhibition.

New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest presents thirty-three artworks centered on a theme of social consciousness as presented by the artists of the WPA/FAP. These artists approached a variety of political and societal issues of the day, including: poverty, war and violence, homelessness, the family, labor and industry, race, gender, intentionally raising issues of struggle and suffering. Although these works were produced in the 1930s, many of these same issues exist today. The severe economic recession of 2009 and 2010 the same questions of class privilege and power, and the growing disparity between the rich and the poor work to create a powerful emotional and aesthetic impact on today's audience.

CHAPTER IV

CREATING AN EXHIBITION

In selecting and hanging the show the problem of how to present the works was faced. Each work was carefully considered for the exhibition. This section is a discussion of each work in the exhibition and the reasoning behind the works inclusion in this exhibition over the more than two hundred works to consider in curating *New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest*.

Entering Gallery X, one is confronted with the most colorful and abstract print in the exhibition. The print is *Countryside*, 1939 by Ida Abelman. This print was selected for the prominent location at the front of the exhibition because of the bright greens, yellow, blue and brown colors that catch the eye, enticing the viewer to enter the gallery.

The artwork shows three men using machinery to plow a field. The print is abstracted, but still recognizable. Jacob Kainen describes her work as “fragmented memories of childhood” with “an irrational, dreamlike quality” (Kainen 167). The men are shown as similar forms, only displaying a head and muscular arm.

The top left figure seems to be operating a more traditional hand plow. While the central figure appears to be operating a more complex motor powered plow. The third figure, in the lower right, is being crushed by the motor powered plow as he claws into the earth with his fingers.

The bright colors seem to give an initial impression of the positive impact of technology, but after examining the image, it is clear that this bright future of technology

has a darker side. The technology eliminates labor and crushes the working-class.

During the 1930s there was debate over the implication of modern technology, will it be our savior or our destruction. This debate continues today as many factory workers lose jobs to advances in technology, and Ida Abelman's print captures one of the contemporary connections the exhibition makes.

This image is so colorful it would have distracted from any other work in the exhibition, so it works well on the movable wall as an introduction to the exhibition. The label and text are to the left of the image, providing context and the background of the artist. The exhibition title, *New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest*, is above the artwork. To the right the exhibition text, found in the appendices section, introduces the audience to the exhibition.

In contrast to Abelman's criticizing of industry and technology is the celebration of labor, such as in the works of Harry Gottlieb and Elizabeth Olds. This exhibition includes two works by each of these artists, hung together. These prints were the first to inspire the research that eventually led to the exhibition, *New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest*. Additionally these two artists held a long lasting friendship, and both were able to gain access to the steel mills of Pittsburgh, of which the print *Blast Furnace* was a result. (Langa "Elizabeth Olds: Gender Difference and Indifference" 6)

Mending Nets by Elizabeth Olds shows a group of fishermen lifting and mending the heavy fish nets. The men strain to carry the nets. The sun is not up, suggesting these men are dedicated to working late, or possible beginning before the sun has risen.

The other Olds work is *Blast Furnace*. This print shows men working with steel, or some other metal. The image promotes the idea of labor and the importance of industry. The composition emphasizes the furnace as a powerful force, and the workers as

in control of the industry.

Next to *Blast Furnace* is the work *Makers of Steel*, by Harry Gottlieb. This print has a focus on the workers. The men are lit up by the bright, yellow glow of the fiery hot steel as they manage the industrial process. The artist utilized the advantages of color lithography to accomplish this glow. The image shows the men working together, and again glorifying labor and industry. Work was scarce during the Depression, so jobs such as these were heavily sought after.

The second print in the exhibition by Gottlieb is *Minor Repairs*. This work shows construction workers putting up a building. The print is a sign of progress and that there is recovery from the Depression. All the prints by Gottlieb and Olds in this exhibition display the worker in a positive light, as hero-like. They are strong, determined and productive.

Blanch Grambs also dealt with the topic of labor. Although she did not depict the workers in the two prints selected for the exhibition, they do show the accomplishments of the laborers and also their harsh living conditions. Both works are of the same size and deal with the same subject matter, coal.

The first print discussed here is titled *Workers Homes*. The image is very dark, and it is difficult to make out the forms. However one does get the impression that the conditions in the company homes were less than ideal. As stated in the label text, Grambs had the opportunity to study coal mining on site.

Grambs other print, *Coal Heap*, shows the product of the workers labor, a massive mound of coal. This image was included to add contrast to the dark image of *Workers Homes*, but also because of the contemporary discussions and debates over coal. Coal is not only being debated on a state level in Kentucky, but on a national level over the idea

of “clean coal” technologies. The contemporary connection is relevant in connecting the viewer to the past.

Another print selected for the exhibition that deals with the theme of labor is by the artist Margaret Lowengrund, titled *Brick Factory*. This work was not only chosen because of the depiction of labor, but also because the artist chose to make a statement on race. The artist depicted both black and white workers doing the job together, an integrated workforce. Quite the statement during the time of segregation.

Adrian Troy, born in England, was both an immigrant to the United States and of African ancestry. *Tarring* was selected for this exhibition as the print depicts workmen on a WPA project tarring a road. A sign in the left side of the image informs the viewer that this is a “Work Program” and both white and black workers complete the job. Troy had great insight on race relations being both an immigrant minority and in a racial minority.

Troy's other work is a very serious, and powerful image, *Freedman's Holding*. An African American woman, thin and skeletal-like, sits upon a structure built of coffins breast feeding a child. Below her children play with crosses and coffins. All are thin, with bones showing through their skin. The image and title suggest that this print is about the struggle of the freed slaves and the death and hardship they endured, but continued to build their lives.

Images of the family were common in this exhibition. A grouping of five works hung, centered, on the longest wall of the gallery, each image consisting of a family scene. The largest, actually a drawing and not a print, is center. Surrounding the work are smaller prints with the inner most being light and similar in subject matter. The outer prints in the grouping are darker in tone. This creates a balance to this grouping, almost a mirror image.

The largest work selected is not a print at all, but a charcoal and watercolor work, *Steel Worker's Family* by Ernest Fiene. Not all the works distributed to the university were prints, the collection includes a number of other types of works on paper. A woman leads her children and holds her infant. The woman is depicted as a strong mother figure. In the background a large factory billows smoke, a scene of industry and as the title suggests where the father works.

As stated, the work is a drawing with watercolor, the only drawing selected for this exhibit. The focus of this exhibition was printmaking, as the exhibition title suggests. However this drawing was selected because of the subject matter and quality of the work. Also, there is much overlap between drawing and printmaking, this justified the inclusion of this work.

This work, a part of the University of Louisville WPA artwork collection, was included in the exhibition due to the depiction of the working class family during the Depression. The mother is shown as a pillar of the family, leading the way. Given the few depictions of strong female figures in the collection, this work contrasts the other images of the struggling mother. Although all the women depicted in the exhibition are by men, and all fit traditional gender stereotypes, a secondary research area, spreading out from this exhibition, could be on depiction of women in WPA art.

Done In by Frank Ominsky, depicts a family scene, a father, mother and two children. The figures are in a circular form, huddled together for support. The father is shown as the protector, with the mother and children being submissive. The title implies that the family is going through very hard times and the dark tone of the print reinforces this. The artwork brings to mind many questions of what this family must be going through to be “done in,” did they lose their home, income, or worse? The title and image

together imply that all they have left is each other, but their tight embrace and strong circular form give some hope to a very uncertain future.

The next image to bring to the discussion is Clara Mahl's *An American Family*. In contrast to the somber image of the Ominsky print, Mahl has depicted a family standing outside, barefoot, in a vast open space. Rows of identical houses stretch of into the distance like a train car.

The family looks aged and distorted, even the children look withered and malnourished. The artist has manipulated the forms and shifted the image perspective, a sense of space and relation becomes difficult. This play with perspective gives the viewer a greater sense of unease. The artist was in no way creating an idealistic image of the American family, as her title might suggest, but was showing an American family isolated and suffering in the Depression.

Share Croppers Family by William Sanger evokes despair. The family sits outside, they look at a single bowl of food. In their faces you can see their pain and struggle.

Already a disenfranchised group before the Depression, sharecroppers faced eviction and other hardships. Sanger brings attention to the plight of the sharecroppers to the general public by depicting the family in this print.

Manhattan Night by Hyman Warsager is darker in tone and mood, much like the print *Done In*. One gallery visitor described the work as initially being very inviting, with the light emanating from the street lamp suggesting hope. However she said she was nearly brought to tears upon seeing the outline of a small child standing up between the couple. Making it clear that the Depression did not only impact the men of society, but even the smallest of children.

One of the most emotionally jarring images in the exhibition involved children. Harry Rein shows two small children, a young boy and girl, digging through the trash to find food as they compete with dogs in this wood cut titled *Competition*. The artist is bringing attention to the issues of homelessness and its impact on children in his art. The use of such a tragic image was likely intended to spur people to action to tackle the problems of homelessness and poverty.

Homelessness and poverty were common artist themes found throughout the exhibition, and was a major societal problem during the Great Depression. In researching the prints of Murray State, one striking and somber image was Betty Parish's print *Bedford Street*. In this print a man is shown pushing a cart into a dark street. The man is in the lower left corner and the curve of the building and use of shadow creates the impression that the city is oppressive and crushing the man. In closer inspection one sees that the buildings are in disrepair. Even though the man is in a populated urban area, he is alone. Parish's print deals with some of the issues of urban poverty in the 1930s.

Gloucester Wharf, by Harry Shokler, has very fine line quality, similar to prints made by James Abbott McNeill Whistler of the Thames in England. This image harks back to the 19th century print societies, while incorporating contemporary issues of labor and unemployment. The quality of the work, as well as the eerie silence in the scene as the people sit and wait gave reason to select this work. The artist leaves it to our imagination if these men are sailors or the homeless, either way their slouched posture informs us that their troubles weigh heavy on them.

Resting, a print by Chet La More, shows a person laying in a rather uncomfortable looking position on a bench outside. The title leaves us to imagine why this person is resting here. It could be the person is homeless and this is the only place to rest,

or the person may be working a difficult job and did not have the strength to make it home. Regardless of why the person is on the bench, the image communicates that this person lives a difficult life and allows for the audience to empathize.

La More also created *Unemployed*. This work shows three men looking to the left side of the image. We can not see what they are looking toward, but the title suggests that perhaps they are in line for a work program, trying to find work.

This image is listed as a serigraph, or screen print, but the image may have used other methods as well. The black areas on the image appear to be lithographs, and some areas appear to have been applied with a brush. Much experimentation went on during this period, particularly with silk screening, so it is quite possible several methods were used to create this image.

Silent Men, by Nils Gren, and *Man in the Street*, by Lloyd William Wulf are two lithographs that were paired together on one of the movable walls. These works together, juxtaposed, on a wall create a dialog between the works. The silence of the Gren print, placed next to the action of the Wulf print heighten the qualities of the other print. They acted as the antithesis of the other.

The work, *Silent Men*, shows two sitting at a small table outside. A cup of coffee and a pipe are at the table, and the men are slouched and not interacting even though they sit at the same table. These men seem to be carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders, as they sit motionless in silence like stone statues.

In contrast, *Man in the Street*, shows a man with book in hand and finger pointed to the sky, confronting the viewer. He speaks out, likely from the bible, but the book is not labeled. He is on the street speaking to anyone who will listen, however no one is shown hearing his message. The mark making in the image is heavy and textured, harsher

than the smooth flow of *Silent Men*.

These two images show how two artists chose to depict street scenes. In the first, *Silent Men*, the viewer is shown the despair of two men, one with a tie and the other without, perhaps a class distinction, sitting together struggling through the Depression. The other image, *Man in the Street*, shows a man struggling to get people to listen, preaching to a world who will not listen.

Pain and suffering was also a common theme of the works selected for this exhibition. Chet La Mores third work selected for the exhibition, *Non Combatants*, deals with war and fascism. This print, a lithograph, shows a group of people laying in an open area outside. There are men, women and children. The sky is dark and in the upper left corner are a group of planes flying away. The title suggests that these people were not soldiers, they are citizens who have been gunned down by planes. This work may have been in reference to the bombing of the Basque City of Guernica by Nazi German planes during the Spanish Civil War. This was the first time planes were used to shoot and bomb citizens. The scene of the twisted and contorted, lifeless bodies is haunting to look at, an effective anti-war image.

Street Fight by Theodore Polos depicts a scene of violence between the police and protesters. The artist captured the violence of this scene with quick and confident marks and even carved into the stone used in the printing. Much like the previous work, this work has strain and tension. This work shows a large street fight as people struggle with the police and each other. Clubs come down upon the people, some fight back and others cower in pain. This image both relates and contrasts with the previous print.

Charles Surendorf created a wood engraving titled *Skid Row*. This print, although it also shows tension and strain, does not cast an empathetic light on poverty like other

prints in this exhibition. In this street scene is drunkenness, a man being thrown out of a store, a woman angrily demanding money with her palm out, people being arrested, and a man asleep or past out on the sidewalk and in the background is a long line of people going into a building. The people all seem angry and unpleasant with scowls, and the artist uses harsh, hard lines and shadows, as well as the title, to imply that the neighborhood is suspicious and underhanded in character. The artist is casting light on some of the negative aspects of poverty. Although the artist did emphasize stereotypes of the poor, the work does express the tensions and frustrations people felt in the Great Depression.

In Harold Archer's print, *Sickbed*, a figure is laying on a bed. At first the scene seems calm, but the hand of the person tells a different story. The hand is contorted and tense, fingers separated and grabbing the bed. As one looks up the body one notices the neck and head, bent back and strained. The person is in pain. As many today are impacted by the current issues with health care, this image connects the past struggles with those of the present time.

Death and mourning was also a topic explored by artist, as already mentioned in La More's *Non Combatants*. Another work to approach this topic is Boris Gorelick's *Case No. - -*. The scene shows a person in a coffin, their face rather large and out of scale. People stand grieving over the coffin, one person even throws themselves upon the coffin. A man sits at a table in the background, hands holding his hand and beyond him are figures standing in shadow in front of a tall building. The title is rather ambiguous, and the images begin to overlap, becoming dreamlike. Kainen described Boris Gorelick's work as bringing "elements of surrealism in their social indictments" (Kainen 166-67). The audience is left to explore this image and create their own tale of sorrow that led to

this scene.

Three works by Joseph Leboit were selected for this exhibition. Kainen described Leboit as being one of the most pronounced expressionists in the Graphic Arts Division (Kainen 167). This artist exhibits a wide range of styles in these three works. The first two in this grouping relate somewhat to the family grouping, in that they do depict families. However, the family was not what led to the selection of the work *Madonna and Child* for this exhibition.

The print is in a very European style, perhaps influenced by Picasso's Rose Period, but what was most striking about this print was an image within the image. In the scene is an image attached to the wall to the left of the young boy. In this scene are rows of bodies, all numbered. Although the print is not dated, Leboit was in the WPA in the later thirties.

This image could be a scene from the holocaust, or depict other atrocities of fascism happening during the 1930's. The artist is making a very subtle reference to fascist atrocities, as having the poster in the background on the wall within the image. The family seems quiet and somber, perhaps mourning the loss of the dead. The title references the Christian figures of Mary and baby Jesus in titling the work *Madonna and Child*. This brings a religious morality and consideration into the subject found in the image on the wall.

The second Leboit image to be discussed, *Derby Winner*, shows a man and a woman standing among a large number of children, with the woman holding two small children. The title suggests a connection to horse racing, or other derby. The image seems to be a family portrait type image, although a rather large family. This image was selected mostly because of the mystery, which gives the viewer a freedom to let their imagination

explore possible interpretations of this artwork.

The final Leboit image is a social commentary. *Societal Burial*, displays a group of well dressed, overweight people at a grave site. The title suggests that this is a scene of a burial attended by high society, or the upper class. Another reading of the title could be that it is in fact society that is being buried, caused by the upper-class. In the background stand two workers with shovels, ready to do the work of filling in the grave. The workers are similar in style to the workers found in Diego Rivera's mural works, who was in New York during the 1930s. This suggests, at the very least, communist sympathies that reinforce the idea of the upper-class destroying society and the workers taking over.

Paired next to this work by Leboit is a work by Ted Witonski, *Après l'Opera*. This worked was paired with *Societal Burial* to highlight the connection of tensions between the working class and upper class that these two works express. Also the top hatted figure in both works seems uncannily similar; it is possible one artist was influenced by the other.

In this work by Witonski two upper-class figures, shown as over weight, well dressed and eyes closed, walk past a working class man going in the opposite direction. The working class man looks back and glares at the rich couple, who go on unaware.

Two Albert Webb prints were included in the exhibition, both works deal with artists. *Parlor Statesman* shows a confrontation between an artist and a man in glasses. Other artists, all carrying drawing boards, gather round the two. Their expressions make the scene comical, but the image make light of the many conflicts that erupted between the government and the artists under their employment.

The other print shows an outdoor art show, and a female artist sits drawing portraits. The works are hung on a wooden plank fence, and the work directly above the

female artist is signed “Webb.” This work really captures the idea of bringing the art to the people. In doing research it was not uncommon to come across an image of artwork from art centers brought to the streets and exhibited for the public.

The artworks cover a wide variety of printmaking methods, and vary in style greatly. The theme that holds the works together is their consistent depictions and criticisms of societal problems. The artist's affiliations to radical political groups and ideologies builds upon this theme of politics and protest that was the basis for selecting the works.

The prints of this exhibition, *New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest*, express many societal issues of the 1930's, evidence of the WPA artist's considerable interest in these issues. Despite government threats and tensions with the artists, a significant minority were able to make their ideologies important topics in their art as government relief workers. The exhibition combines aligns the ideals of the Roosevelt administration's desire to alleviate the suffering of working families, giving a fresh, fair start.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest was a welcomed challenge to curate. The topic held both academic and personal interest, and the resulting exhibition was cohesive, told a story, and visually worked. This thesis explored the history of the WPA/FAP and the experiences and views of the artists. Personal experiences have also helped to shape this exhibition.

The prints for the exhibition were carefully selected based on the theme of politics and protest. This broad topic explored issues of the day, such as, poverty and homelessness, pain and suffering, and issues of class, race and gender. The title not only referred to the politics and protest associated with these societal topics, but also reference to the tensions between the government and the artists. Many of the artists organized to protest for their right to funding. These activist artists were able to win several battles, among the wins was the right for non-citizens to continue to participate in the FAP in 1938. However, there were losses as well, such as the inability to change the 18 month firing policy.

This exhibition brings attention to the importance of the WPA/FAP and the program printmakers. The program not only produced art for the nation, but also trained artists who became faculty for university printmaking programs. The prints, distributed to institutions across the country, helped to start the art collections of the University of Louisville, as well as Murray State University and The University of Kentucky.

New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest presents a collection of prints that are still sought after items. These prints can still be found for sale in galleries and auctions. The prints of this exhibition not only stirred the passions of the people of the 1930s, but also of the people of today.

In looking back on this experience there are some lessons learned. I regret not including direct quotes from the artists in the exhibition labels. These artists made powerful statements, such as those used at the beginning of some of the chapters of this thesis. The quotes would have helped the audience understand the artist's point of view better, and provided additional insight into the artist's work. I also would have liked to have found ways to better engage the public with the exhibition, perhaps with a lecture, video, or other event in the gallery. Finally, I needed to better promote the exhibit.

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APPENDIX

1. EXHIBITION TEXT

INTRODUCTION

NEW DEAL PRINTMAKING:

POLITICS AND PROTEST

The 1930s brought with it the hardship of the Great Depression. President Franklin D. Roosevelt began many projects as a part of the New Deal to revive the American economy. In this effort American culture was not left out, with the creation of the Federal Art Project (FAP) under the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The artists were to depict the American scene, and met this broad subject with an equally broad range of artistic creations.

The FAP operated from 1935-1943, alongside other cultural projects. The period saw more government support for the arts than any other time in American history. However, the WPA artists were under threat of having wages cut or being let go from the program altogether. The government did this to try to lower FAP costs, and to encourage artists to seek private employment, of which there was little.

In 1933 the Artists' Union formed, with printmakers being some of the first to organize. The union fought for funding and support of the FAP program, and artists picketed, protested and were even arrested for their cause. Many of the artists represented here were leaders and members of the Artists' Union, and other politically engaged groups.

These prints, from the Graphic Arts Division of the FAP, were selected based on representations of labor, poverty and suffering. Many of the artists represented here reflected their political ideology and social protest in their art. Also represented are some non-radical, non-political artists, however their depictions of the harsh realities of the Depression are powerful statements.

As the project came to a close, these prints came to Kentucky in the early 1940s at the start of the Second World War. The WPA artworks were distributed to libraries, universities, museums and other institutions on permanent loan from the federal government. This selection comes from the collections of the University of Louisville, the University of Kentucky Art Museum, and Murray State University.

2. ARTIST LABELS



Figure 1

Ida Abelman (1910-2002)

Countryside, 1939

Color Woodcut

On loan from the University of Kentucky Art Museum

Abelman, daughter of Russian and Polish immigrants, was known for producing socially conscious art. Her work often reflects the negative impact of industrialization on society. She was a part of the anti-fascist, leftist American Artists' Congress, and was known to set up picket lines when funding for the program was threatened. Abelman also spent time in the Midwest working on murals and an exhibition about public housing in Iowa.(Sherry)

Countryside presents an image of men being crushed by a labor-saving farm machine. Labor-saving technology meant the loss of many labor jobs, adding to unemployment problems. The work is technically significant in its medium, color woodcut. This technique was nearly impossible to use in the United States before the FAP due to the cost. With the government supplying the workshop and supplies artists were free to explore without the constraints of market demand and material cost. (Warsager 139-40)



Figure 2

Harold Anchel (1912-1980)

Sickbed, 1937

Lithograph

Harold Anchel was a member of the Graphics Division of the New York FAP, the Art Students League and the National Academy of Design. In his work *Sickbed*, a young person is shown lying in bed, the contorted position of his hand expresses the person's pain.



Figure 3

Ernest Fiene (1894-1965)

Steel Worker's Family, 1936

Charcoal and watercolor

Born in Germany, Fiene came to America in 1912. He studied throughout the United States and Europe and was an accomplished painter and printmaker. Although *Steel Worker's Family* is not a print, the work is included to make a point. This work was likely a part of a series done to attract more industry to the Pittsburgh area. However the politically leftist Artists' Union of Philadelphia exhibited works from the series in an exhibition due to the plight of the worker that the series also conveyed (Langa "Elizabeth Olds: Gender Difference and Indifference"). This brings up questions of the artist's intent. It is not known if Fiene intended the work to be seen in a political light, but his contemporaries did see a connection.



Figure 4

Boris Gorelick (1912-1984)

Case No.---

Lithograph

Gorelick, born in Russia, immigrated with his family when he was very young. He lived most of his life in New York and California. He was one of the founding members of the Artists' Union, and union president for 3 years. He described the purpose of forming the union as “bringing about recognition of the responsibility of government to the artist per se and also the need for unity amongst the artists for their own survival”(Hoag). As a WPA artist, he created murals, set up the Phoenix School of Art and Design, and joined the FAP Graphics Division. In the Graphics Division his major focus was on lithography, which had fallen out of favor as an artistic practice. He saw the method as an effective way for artists to reproduce drawings for sale. Following the WPA, he went on to teach and work in animation (Hoag).



Figure 5

Harry Gottlieb (1895-1992)

Makers of Steel, 1939

Color Lithograph



Figure 6

Harry Gottlieb (1895-1992)

Minor Repairs, 1937

Lithograph

Gottlieb was born in Romania and came to Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1906 with his family. He was the first director of the American Artists School, which focused on training artists to be socially conscious. He also served as president of the Artists' Union. He left an artists' colony at Woodstock, New York for Europe after receiving a Guggenheim Fellowship. He returned and became a part of the Graphics Division in New York City. He was involved with the American Artists' Congress and was a Communist Party member. He was known for his depiction of the working class, as can be seen in both works in this exhibition. He also helped develop screen-printing into a fine art medium in the Screen Printing Unit of the Federal Art Project ("Harry Gottlieb Is Dead; W.P.A. Artist Was 98").

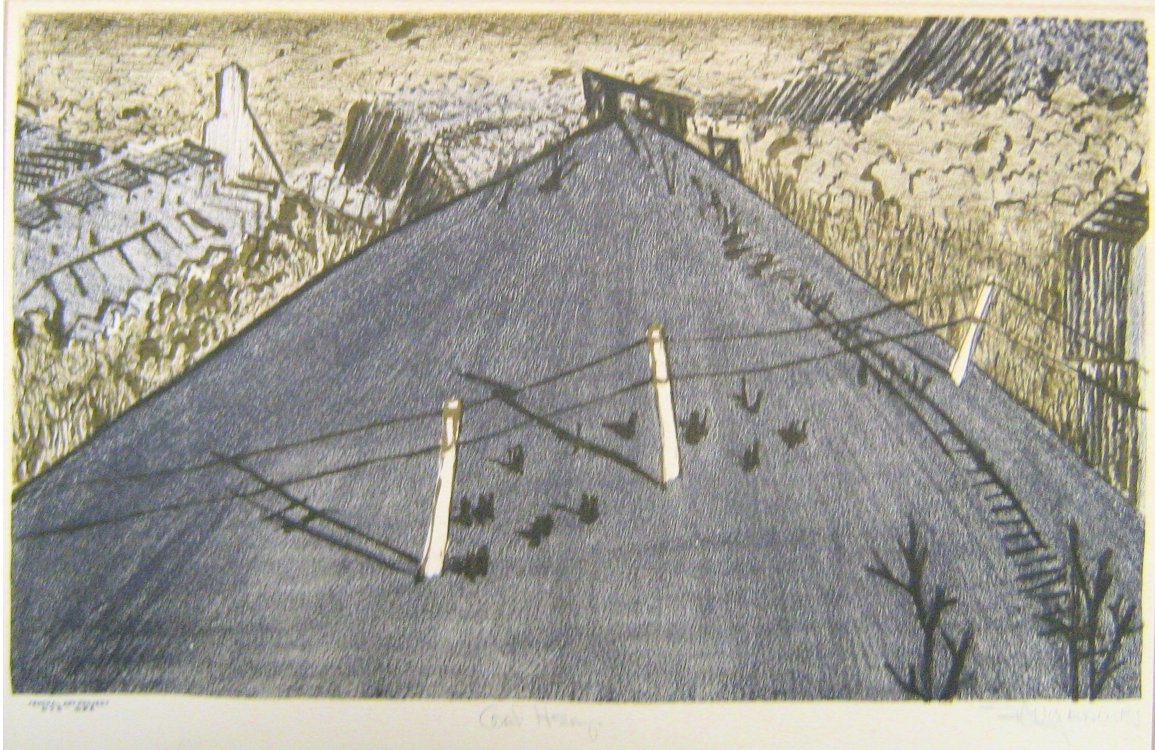


Figure 7

Blanche Grambs (b.1916)

Coal Heap, 1938

Color Lithograph



Figure 8

Blanche Grambs (b.1916)

Workers Homes

Etching and aquatint

At 20, the youngest of the printmakers in the New York Graphic Arts Division, Grambs was also only active for six years (1934-1939) as a printmaker. She was born to American parents in Beijing, China, and left for the United States to study at the Art Students League of New York in 1934. She also studied Marxist theory at the New Workers School, and was known to attend Communist rallies. She joined the Artists' Union, serving on the membership committee. And in 1936 was arrested protesting project budget cuts (Coppel 154).

Grambs spent time in Lanceford, Pennsylvania researching mining, even gaining permission to go into a mine. These two works are likely from the mining series created from the experience. Later in life she became an illustrator, working on several children's books (Coppel 154).



Figure 9

Nils Gren (1893-1940)

Silent Men, 1936

Lithograph



Figure 10

Chet La More (1908-1980)

Non Combatants

Lithograph

On loan from the University of Kentucky Art Museum



Figure 11

Chet La More (1908-1980)

Resting

Lithograph

On loan from the University of Kentucky Art Museum



Figure 12

Chet La More (1908-1980)

Unemployed

Serigraph

On loan from the University of Kentucky Art Museum

La More attended the University of Wisconsin and Columbia University and was active in FAP from 1937 until 1939. He served on the National Coordinating Committee of the Artists' Union, but left the union in order to focus on his art. He had an interest in social issues since childhood, and this reflects in his art (*Langa Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York* 230).

Unemployed, referencing the job-lines of the Depression, uses screen printing. The word “serigraph” was invented during this time to distinguish creative screen printing from commercial. *Non Combatants* may depict the aftermath of the 1937 attack on Guernica, Spain. The first time planes were used in attacking civilian targets.



Figure 13

Joseph Leboit (1907-2002)

Derby Winner

Lithograph



Figure 14

Joseph Leboit (1907-2002)

Madonna and Child

Etching and Aquatint



Figure 15

Joseph Leboit (1907-2002)

Society Burial

Etching and Aquatint

Leboit studied with Thomas Hart Benton at the Art Students League. He joined the FAP in 1935 and left in 1940, in that time he made some 25 socially-engaged prints. He was a member of the Artists' Union and the American Artists Congress. In the FAP he became an administrator for the Silkscreen Unit. After leaving the FAP he taught at the American Artists School, of which Gottlieb and Olds were affiliated. In the 1950s he left art to become a psychologist (Coppel 200).

Society Burial shows an overweight upper-class at the grave of society, as the workers stand by to cover the coffin. The other two works show the family of the Depression.

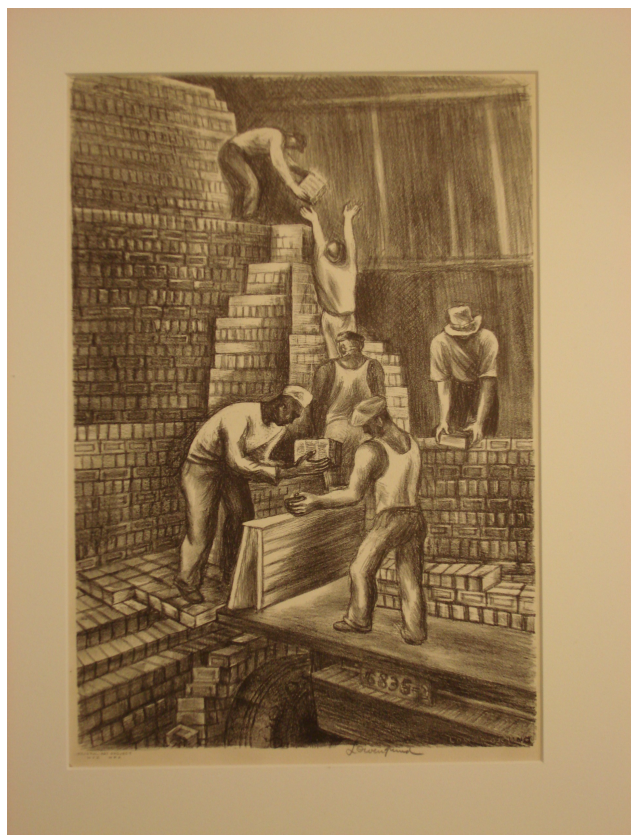


Figure 16

Margaret Lowengrund (1902-1957)

Brick Factory, 1937

Lithograph

On Loan from Murray State University

Lowengrund grew up in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and studied at the Art Students League. She was involved in the Graphic Arts Division in 1936, and did work on the New York City FAP newsletter the *Art Project Reporter*. She later became the director of the Contemporaries Art Gallery and Workshop in New York City (Langa *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York* 217, 31). In this work she depicts workers, both black and white, working together in a time when racial segregation was the norm.



Figure 17

Clara Mahl (1910-1988)

An American Family

Etching

Mahl studied at the Grand Central School of Art, the Art Students' League and the National Academy of Design. She was an artist for the FAP in New York City from 1935 to 1942 ("International Fine Print Dealers Association"). In 1936 she joined the Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros' Experimental Workshop, whose mission was to create art for the people and was allied with the American Communist Party (Hurlburt 238-39).



Figure 18

Elizabeth Olds (1896-1991)

Blast Furnace

Lithograph

On Loan from the University of Kentucky Art Museum

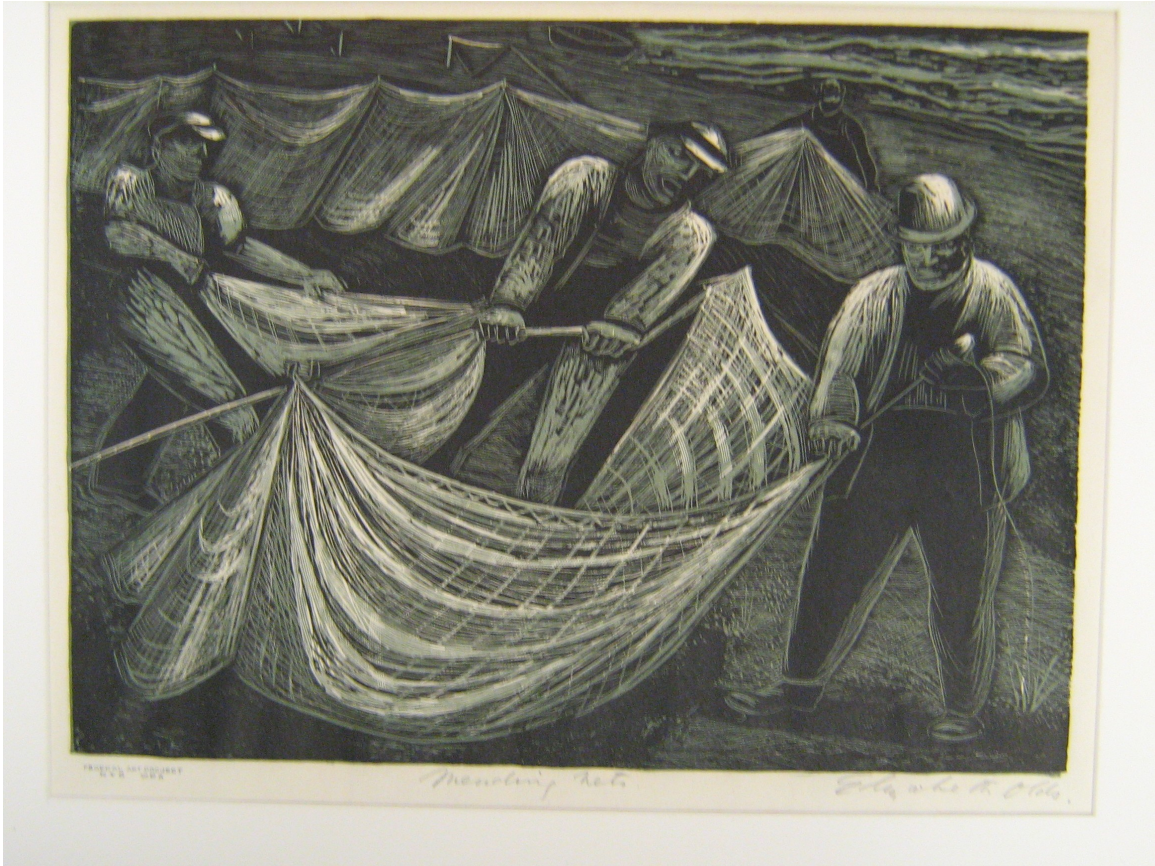


Figure 19

Elizabeth Olds (1896-1991)

Mending Nets

Color Wood Engraving

A founding member of the Silkscreen Unit of the FAP, Olds also taught at the American Artists School. She was the first woman to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship. The FAP provided many opportunities for female and minority artists who suffered constant discrimination in private employment. Olds was dedicated to producing art for the masses. She was involved with both the Art Students League and the Artists' Union. (Langa "Elizabeth Olds: Gender Difference and Indifference")



Figure 20

Frank Omsky (1898-1981)

Done In

Etching

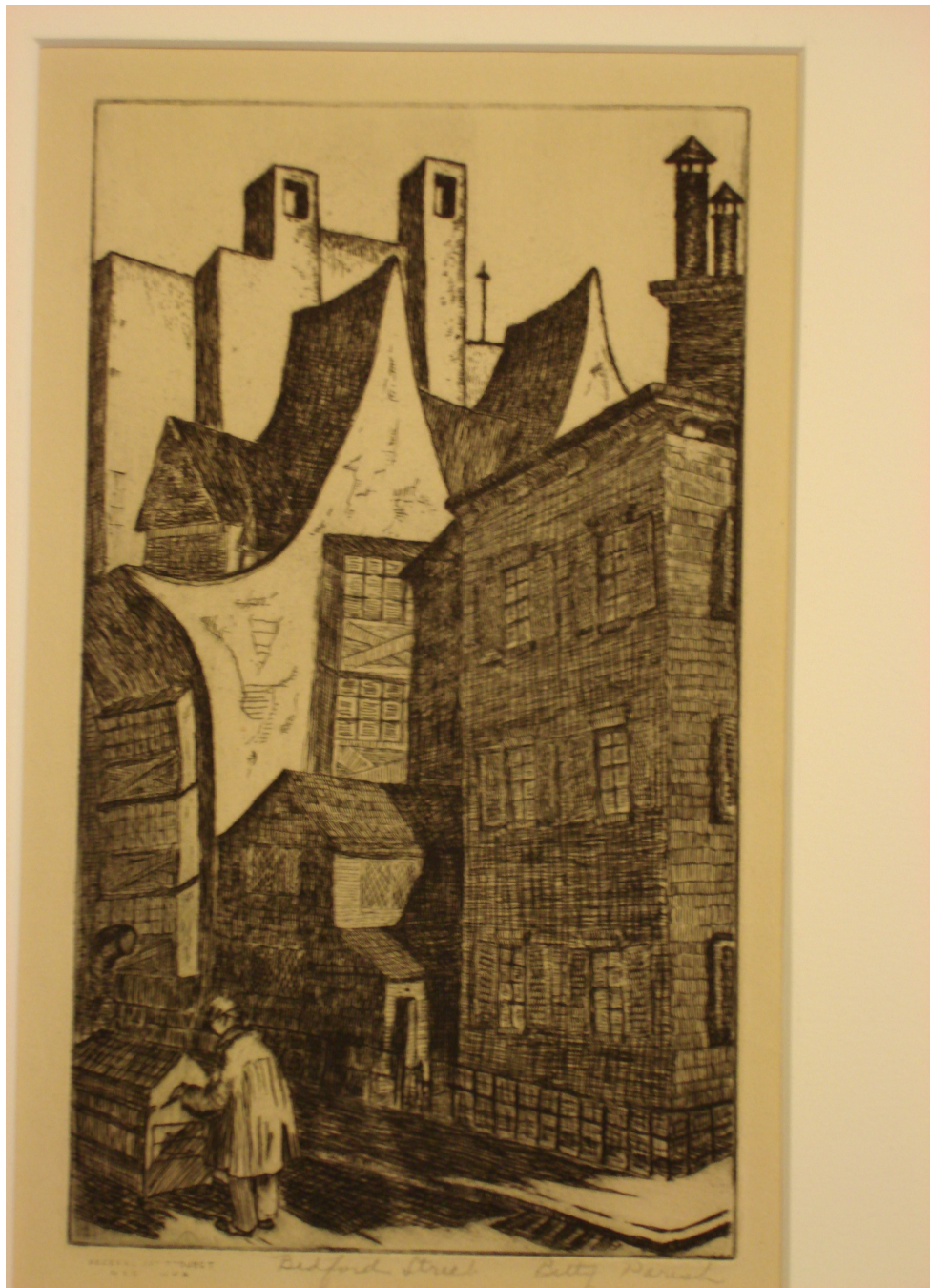


Figure 21

Betty Parish (1910-1986)

Bedford Street, 1937

Etching

On Loan from Murray State University



Figure 22

Theodore Polos (1901-1976)

Street Fight

Lithograph

Polos left his home in Greece at age 14 for America, eventually making his way to California. He joined the FAP and was assigned to the Easel Painting Division. Polos won a \$300 Purchase Prize in 1937 from the San Francisco Art Museum Annual, making himself ineligible for the FAP as he was no longer destitute. He spent the money and reapplied (McChesney).

He was ordered by his supervisor to try lithography for the first time. He worked with the commercial lithographers, and his approach upset them greatly. He spent several months experimenting in the Lithography Project, creating ten to twelve dark and moody prints, five or six were submitted to the WPA (McChesney).



Figure 23

Harry Rein (1908-1969)

Competition

Woodcut



Figure 24

William Sanger (1875-1961)

Share Croppers Family

Drypoint



Figure 25

Harry Shokler (1896-1978)

Gloucester Wharf, 1937

Etching

On Loan from Murray State University

Shokler studied at the Cincinnati Art Academy and the School of Fine and Applied Art in New York City and the Académie Colorossi in Paris, France. He was an important innovator in screen-printing, and wrote the *Artists Manual for Silk Screen Printmaking* in 1946 ("Art in a Day's Work: Prints from the Wpa" 15).



Figure 26

Charles Surendorf (1906-1979)

Skid Row

Wood Engraving

Surendorf studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Art Students League of New York, Mills College in Oakland, and Ohio State University. He made prints and paintings for the San Francisco FAP and later worked as a teacher and writer.

("Art in a Day's Work: Prints from the Wpa" 15)



Figure 27

Adrian Troy (1901-1977)

Freedman's Holdings

Engraving



Figure 28

Adrian Troy (1901-1977)

Tarring, 10/25

Linocut

Troy came to the United States in 1922 after studying art in France. He joined the Federal Art Project in Chicago during the Depression. Troy, a black immigrant from England, produced prints, and a book, depicting the African-American experience ("Adrian Troy: Brick Laying"). *Freedman's Holdings* is a socially charged image dealing with issues of race and inequality in America.



Figure 29

Hyman Warsager (1909-1974)

Manhattan Night

Etching and Aquatint

Warsanger attended a number of schools in Connecticut and New York. While in the FAP he helped start the Screen Printing Unit in New York. He was an Artists' Union member, and made several political cartoons for *New Masses*, a journal affiliated with communist ideology (Langa *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York* 235). In *Manhattan Night* the artist sheds light on the homelessness issues in New York by showing a group of homeless people huddled under a street lamp. The print used etching and aquatint, a process of printing in which acid is used to create lines and texture on a metal plate to hold ink for transfer to paper through a press.



Figure 30

Albert James Webb (1891-1975)

Parlor Statesman, 1936

Etching

On Loan From Murray State University



Figure 31

Albert James Webb (1891-1975)

The Moon and Sixpence

Drypoint

Webb studied at the Art Students League and worked for the New York City FAP from 1935-1943. He was known for his use of satire, which can be seen in these two prints. ("Art in a Day's Work: Prints from the Wpa" 15)

Parlor Statesman shows a young artist with portfolio and a project administrator having a dispute. It was not uncommon in the later years of the FAP for artists to be terminated after 18 month or to go up for review for continued work. The Artists' Union advocated for the artists on this matter.

The Moon and Sixpence shows an artist on the street selling and exhibiting her work, struggling to make a living in the depression. Some WPA artwork was exhibited on the streets. The title may refer to a 1919 book by the same name about a man who leaves his family to pursue the life of the artist. It is loosely based on the life of Paul Gauguin.



Figure 32

Ted Witonski (1911-1977)

Après l'Opera

Etching



Figure 33

Lloyd William Wulf (1913-1965)

Man in the Street

Lithograph

Wulf, born in Nebraska, joined the California FAP during the Depression. He focused on lithography, a printing process using a large stone to transfer an image through a chemical process ("International Fine Print Dealers Association"). During the FAP lithography began to develop in the United States outside of commercial printing, New techniques were developed in the FAP, including a new transfer paper for the printing process was invented in the California FAP (Limbach 146-47).

3. BROCHURE

Includes:

Exhibition Introduction Text

Selected Bibliography

Images of seven works from exhibit:

Joseph Leboit, *Society Burial*, etching

Harry Gottlieb, *Makers of Steel*, 1939, color lithograph

Lloyd William Wulf, *Man in the Street*, lithograph

Elizabeth Olds, *Mending Nets*, color wood engraving

Ted Witonski, *Après l'Opera*, etching

Theodore Polos, *Street Fight*, lithograph

Frank Ominsky, *Done In*, etching

Exhibition Checklist of complete show

4. EXHIBITION ANNOUCEMENT

Includes:

Images of one works from exhibition:

Joseph Leboit, *Society Burial*, etching

(detail on back of announcement)

Exhibition date and times:

February 18 – March 21, 2010

Opening reception: February 18, 7:30-9pm

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education:

University of Louisville, Candidate for M.A. Critical and Curatorial Studies
Hite Scholarship Recipient
Hanover College, B.A., May 2006, Studio Art Major, Art History Minor
Outstanding Studio Art Senior Award

Employment and Experience:

February 2010-March 2010, "New Deal Printmaking: Politics and Protest," Graduate Thesis Exhibition at University of Louisville, Gallery X. Louisville, KY.

February 2010- April 2010, Intern, "Why Quilts Matter: History, Art and Politics" A Documentary Film, Prepared by: The Kentucky Quilt Project. Louisville, KY.

November 2009- February 2010, Committee Member, "Century Project," Exhibition on campus during Health and Body Awareness week (Last week in February), University of Louisville. Louisville, KY.

July 2009- January 2010, Museum Office Assistant/Intern, 21c Museum Hotel/the International Contemporary Art Foundation. Louisville, KY.
Maintain office files, Artist files, Embark database and office correspondence.
Assist with art handling and research. Assist with program setup and logistics.

January 2009- July 2009, Curatorial Intern, Carnegie Center for Art and History. New Albany, IN.
Co-curate *Heads Up! Drawings and Sculptures by William Duffy* and write text for the gallery guide. Create gallery wall layout for High School Art Show. Assist in creating poetry reading and curating for the Penny Sisto exhibit, *Faces of Faith*. Assist in curating *Remembering William Hancock*.

February 2009- May 2009, Volunteer, Portland Museum. Louisville, KY.

Research for an exhibit of “Harper's Weekly” focusing on Lincoln.

January 2009- May 2009, Cressman Center. Louisville, KY.

Create exhibit proposal for the photography of John Ranard for summer 2009.

January 2009- May 2009, Frazier Museum. Louisville, KY.

Research grants for potential conservation lab.

January 2009- Present, Collection Assistant, University of Louisville Art Collection.
Louisville, KY.

Assist with the University of Louisville collection database, photograph works,
and art installation and handling.

August 2007- August 2008, Interpretive Services Associate, National Underground
Railroad Freedom Center. Cincinnati, OH.

Aid in research, tours, assist in exhibit guide (aprox. 70) training and
management, create training manuals and research. Increase volunteer retention
substantially. Assist in the development of programs, including pod cast on
Aminah Robinson artwork. Manage Youth Docents and interns.

August 2007-June 2008, Public Ally, Public Allies Program. Cincinnati, OH.

A ten month, Americorps, leadership training program including an
apprenticeship (Freedom Center position) and weekly meetings and projects
focusing on: Collaboration, Inclusion, Asset Based Development, Continuous
Learning, Integrity, Self Awareness, Careers in Public Life, Community
Engagement, and Leadership.

August 2006-August 2007, Red Cross/V.I.S.T.A. Community Disaster Educator.
Louisville, KY.

Educate the people of Louisville on disaster preparedness, reaching an average of
50 adults and students a week. Develop hands on educational activities. Assist in
volunteer training and events and programming. Trained in Shelter Operations,
Information Dissemination, Case Management, and Public Relations. Assist with
Red Cross Kentucky Youth Leadership Camp. Organize a juried student poster
show, receiving 150 entries.

May 2006- June 2006, “Hanover College Exhibition,” Curated exhibition at Ivy Tech
Community College. Columbus, IN.