

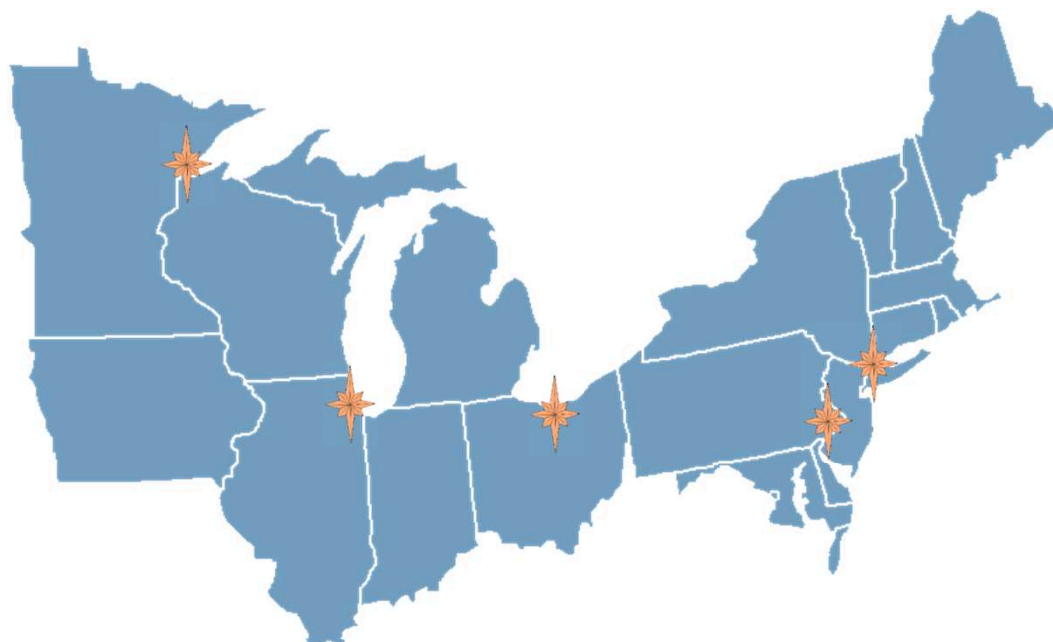
SPIRIT OF THE AMERICAN CITY

Original prints and photographs 1920s -1940s

A unique exhibition of prints and historic photographs capturing where the artists once stood

CATHERINE BURNS FINE ART





New York, NY
Philadelphia, PA
Chicago, IL
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Cleveland, OH

Best viewed on a large screen. Menu buttons below allow you to zoom, share, bookmark and print this exhibition.

SPIRIT OF THE AMERICAN CITY

When admiring beautiful art, we often imagine ourselves standing where the artist once stood. Join us as we share works by some of our favorite printmakers, ranging from a cool precisionist skyscraper by Charles Sheeler, to teeming masses of humanity by Benton Spruance, to the lonely solitude of city life by Edward Hopper. Drawn to urban sophistication and glamour, most artists embraced a romantic vision of the city, even though the prints were created during the trying times of the Depression.

All the prints in this exhibition are **available for purchase**; the only photograph for sale is Margaret-Bourke White's "Unloading Coal for a Freighter". Inquiries are welcome.

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HOWARD COOK

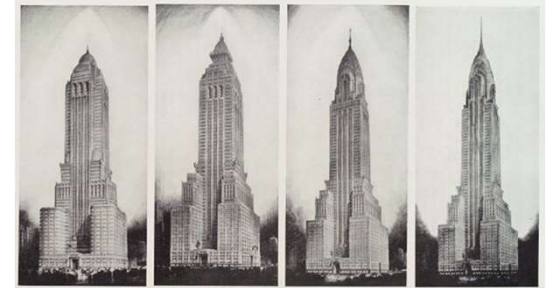
Chrysler Building, 1930

Duffy 122. Wood engraving on thin wove paper. One of 50 impressions.

Signed in pencil.


10 1/8 x 6 1/16 in : 25.7 x 15.4 cm

[more information](#)



[Click to enlarge.](#)

Likely inspired by the highly publicized race to build the tallest building, Cook visited the Chrysler Building site just after the spire was lifted to the top but before the dramatic Art Deco metal "crown" was installed.

 Publicity news footage about the building of the Chrysler Building, 1930. [Click to watch.](#)



Sunday July 29, 1928, New York Times
[Click to view PDF of the article.](#)

CHRISTOPHER NEVINSON

The Great White Way, 1920

Black 71. Lithograph. Edition of 25.

Signed in pencil.

19 3/4 x 12 in : 50.1 x 30.6 cm

[more information](#)

Photograph of the Great White Way with glowing lights, ca 1920.



The British artist Christopher Nevinson first visited New York in 1919 for an exhibition of his war prints. In contrast to London at that time, New York City inspired amazement and awe with its fifty to sixty story skyscrapers and electric lights that brought after-hour streets alive with activity.

During his visit, Nevinson created many drawings of the new architecture, including nocturnal images capturing the bright radiating lights, unique to the city. These included preparatory sketches for the *Great White Way*. This stretch of city street was given its nickname by a journalist in 1902 when he penned an article "Found on the Great White Way," meant to inspire tourists from around the world to experience the breathtaking site for themselves.



Jonathan Bober, Curator of Prints at the National Gallery, selected this print for the [London Original Print Fair Collector's Choice](#): "The Great White Way (1920) conveys his wonder at the energies of Manhattan on the eve of its first vibrant era, as well as a satisfaction at the natural coincidence of his geometry with the city's grid and canyons."



Footage of The Great White Way in the 1920s

CHILDE HASSAM

Washington's Birthday – Fifth Avenue and 23rd Street, 1916

Cortissoz & Clayton 68. Etching on pale greenish laid ledger paper. Signed by the artist with his cypher and inscribed "imp" in pencil. 12 3/4 x 7 in : 32.4 x 17.8 cm.

[more information](#)



In January 1916, Woodrow Wilson proposed a plan for potential participation in WWI, and the Washington's Birthday festivities that year were focused on a build-up of American military force. A predecessor to Hassam's *Flag* series of paintings, also created in 1916, the etching demonstrates the patriotic fervor of the times.

Hassam's impressionistic rendering of the glimmering Flatiron Building recalls the atmospheric photograph of 1903 by Alfred Stieglitz (left).





EDWARD HOPPER

East Side Interior, 1922

Levin 85. Etching with drypoint on wove paper, full margins.

Edition of 100. Signed in pencil.

8 x 10 in : 20.3 x 25.4 cm

[more information](#)

From left: Study for Room By The Sea;
Sun in an Empty Room, 1963;
Hopper's studio in Washington Square



View a 1920s NYC
Industrial Map with
Hopper's studio location.



Interview with Edward
Hopper about his
creative process.



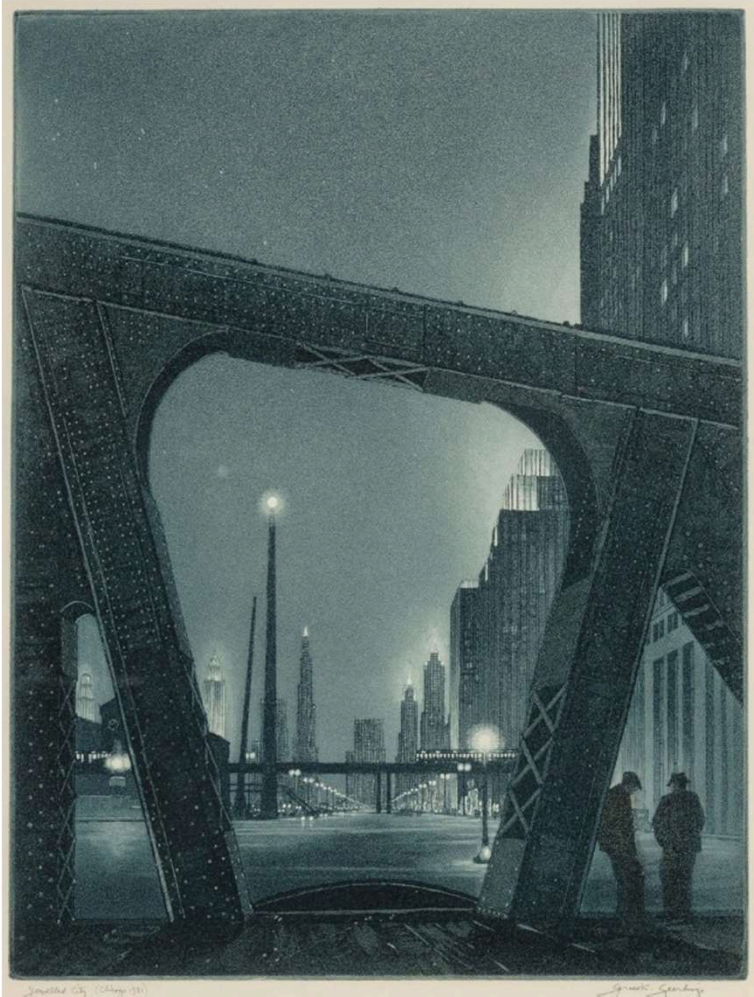
Collector's Choice, London
Original Print Fair by Catherine
Daunt, Curator of Prints and
Drawings, British Museum



In 1956, Hopper wrote about the inspiration for this etching as "memories of glimpses of rooms seen from the streets in the eastside in my walks in that part of the city. No implication was intended with any ideology concerning the poor and oppressed. The interior itself was my main interest—simply a piece of New York, the city that interests me so much. . ."

The corner view of a room was an interior favorite of Hopper's. Perhaps he was moved by the stark light from the window in his Washington Square studio. He used this compositional device in many of his works to animate the surfaces of the interior space and imbue the scene with dramatic tension.





Click here to understand more about where Geerlings stood while making preparatory drawings for *Jeweled City*.

GERALD GEERLINGS

Jewelled City, 1931

Czestochowski 21vii/vii.

Etching and aquatint printed in blue ink.

A rare variant color proof.

Signed and titled in pencil.

15 5/8 x 11 3/4 in : 39.7 x 29.9 cm

[more information](#)



In the artist's words:

"In endeavoring to distill the essence of a city when the composition consists predominantly of buildings, the challenge is always formidable. To me the immediate requirement is to make many, many sketches, varying the standpoint from which to draw, the perspective horizon, the chiaroscuro, and even the relative height and location of the structures.

"The variety of tonal values, the pattern which leads the eye in ever changing patterns, and the elimination of the boring or banal details are superior to a photograph which could hold a viewer's interest for a much shorter period.

"I refuse to do a lithograph or an etching of a subject matter that when greatly reduced in size, the reproduction looks like a photograph. If my final results with lithograph pencil or etching needle can be mistaken for a photo, then it is a waste of my time to spend hours and hours doing what I can achieve with my camera in less than a second."

(Gerald Geerlings, by Joseph Czestochowski, p. 24)

GERALD GEERLINGS

Civic Insomnia, 1932

Aquatint on green wove paper with full margins. Edition of 38.

A rare proof printed in green and greenish brown ink. Signed, titled and annotated, "(New York 1932)" in pencil.

10 15/16 x 14 1/8 in : 27.8 x 35.9 cm

[more information](#)



Sunset silhouette of Midtown Manhattan's skyscrapers, early 1932. View looking southwest from Queensboro bridge.

Photo by Samuel H. Gottscho. Source: Stern, Robert A.M. Gilmartin, Gregory. Mellins, Tomás. "New York 1930. Architecture and Urbanism between the Two World Wars" (Nueva York. Rizzoli. 1987).



Looking back from Brooklyn to Manhattan at evening, Geerlings was intrigued by the glowing lights of the budding skyline. This special proof is printed in green ink with the background in a subtle warmer tone, unlike the brown ink of the regular edition. *Civic Insomnia* is a tour-de-force of aquatint, a difficult printmaking technique in which Geerlings excelled. "To achieve the atmospheric effect in the view of the night skyline from across the river, Geerlings used a large watercolor brush to spread the acid and vary the length of acid biting time for each degree of blackness. The lovely dark night with beautiful gradations is unique to his work." (Hersh Cohen, *The Grollier Club*)



HOWARD COOK

George Washington Bridge with "B", 1931-32

Lithograph on wove paper, full margins.

Edition of 50. Signed, dated and inscribed
75 in pencil.

13 3/4 x 9 13/16 in : 34.9 x 24.9 cm

[more information](#)

When Cook and his wife moved back to New York in 1930, the George Washington Bridge, the longest bridge in the world, was nearing completion and was undoubtedly well covered by the press.

Cook was clearly fascinated with the geometric and repetitive patterns and shapes in the new bridge. Perhaps he was inspired by a similar photograph of the bridge by world renowned photographer, Edward Steichen; or in any case, the two artists shared an aesthetic sensibility. The Steichen 1931 photograph was featured in the opening exhibition in the new location of the Museum of Modern Art. The photograph was also made into an immense 10' x 8' mural celebrating industrial triumph of America and undeniably had an impact in the art world.



Cook's wife, Barbara "B" Latham



Photo by: Edward Steichen
George Washington Bridge, New York, 1931.
Gelatin silver print

HOWARD COOK

Harbor Skyline, 1930

Duffy 129. Soft ground etching and aquatint.

One of 40 proofs. Signed, dated, and numbered 17/50 in pencil.

9 5/8 x 11 15/16 in : 24.4 x 30.3 cm

[more information](#)



New York Harbor ca. 1935



Footage of New York Harbor 1930



Howard Cook was captivated by the bustling Manhattan harbor, animated by dancing plumes of steam. Perhaps he was aware that the states of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut in 1930 publicly acknowledged the need to address a growing issue of pollution in the harbor waters. The pollution was due in large part to the influx of cargo ships bearing coal, billowing out soot and smog from their own coal-powered steam engines, as well as an increasing number of tugboats to guide them into dock. The extent of the pollution in NYC was not duplicated until the 1960s.

GERALD GEERLINGS

Black Magic, 1929

Etching and aquatint printed in brown ink on green laid paper. Edition of 100. Signed and titled in pencil.

11 3/4 x 6 5/8 inches : 29.9 x 16.8 cm

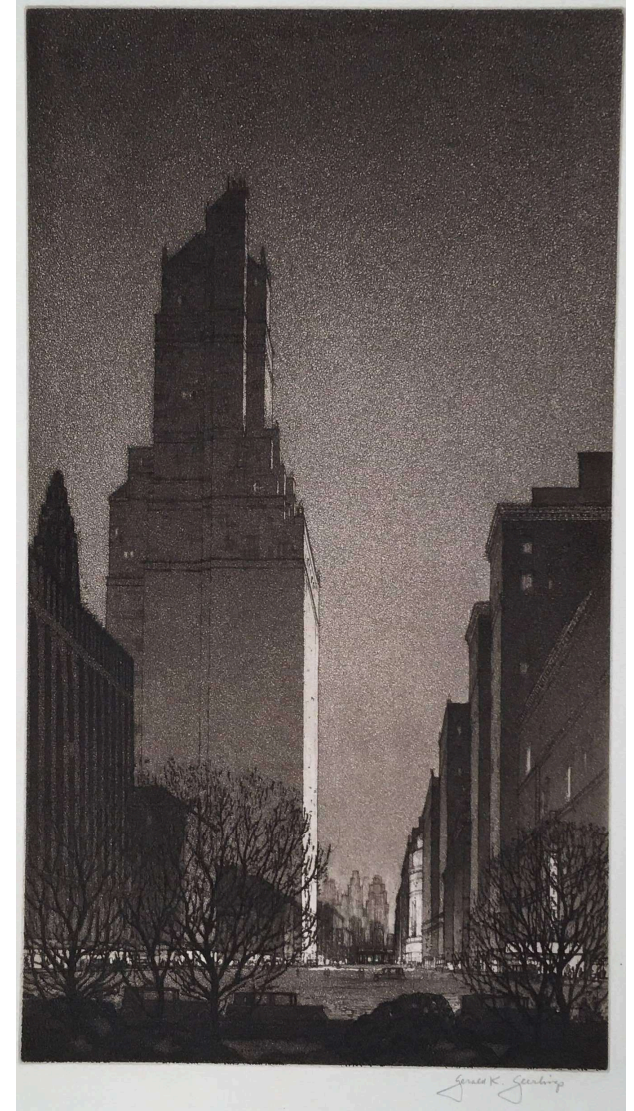
[more information](#)



The Warwick Hotel in
New York, ca 1929

This etching and aquatint focuses on the Warwick Hotel on West 54th Street and 6th Avenue in New York. The hotel was built in 1926 by William Hearst for his mistress, Marion Davies, who was often featured at Ziegfeld's Theater across the street from the hotel. If you look closely at the print you can see the theater lights glowing across the street and bathing the hotel façade with light. Comparing preparatory sketches to the print, Geerlings chose to eliminate foreground lights and accents which makes the glow of the theatre even more brilliant.

Preparatory sketches from
Princeton's Collection.
Double click to zoom in.





MARTIN LEWIS

Rainy Day, Queens, 1931

McCarron 94. Drypoint. Edition of 70.

Signed in pencil.

10 5/8 x 11 7/8 in : 27 x 30.1 cm

[more information](#)



Click here to see the actual location in Queens where the artist once stood.

A master of intaglio, Martin Lewis's prints are characterized by his dramatic use of dark and light, which captured the mood and energy of New York in the 1930s and foreshadowed *film noir* in vogue a decade later. His etchings elevated mundane city scenes and portrayed both moments of solitude and bustling crowds. Lewis and his lifelong friend, Edward Hopper, were two of the best-known artists specializing in nocturnes and isolated figures.

A photo of a rainy day street ca 1930.



GEORGE GROSZ

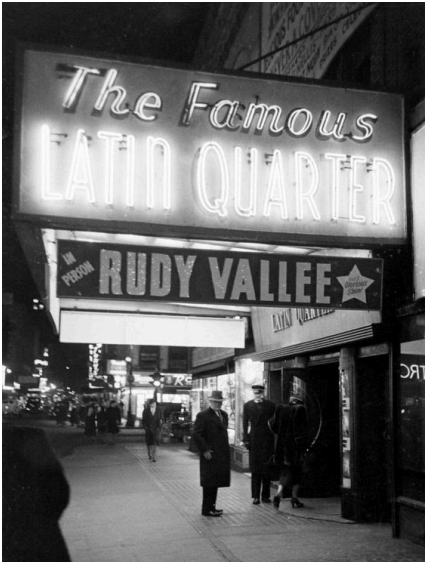
The Green Door, 1934

Pencil on paper, to be included in Ralph Jentsch's upcoming catalogue raisonné. Preparatory drawing for a watercolor illustrating "The Voice of the City and Other Stories" by O. Henry, The Limited Editions Club, NY, 1935. Signed in pencil. 23 ¼ x 18 1/8 in : 59.1 x 46 cm

PROVENANCE:

Studio of the artist, Long Island, 1934
George Grosz Estate, 1959
Private Collection, California

[more information](#)



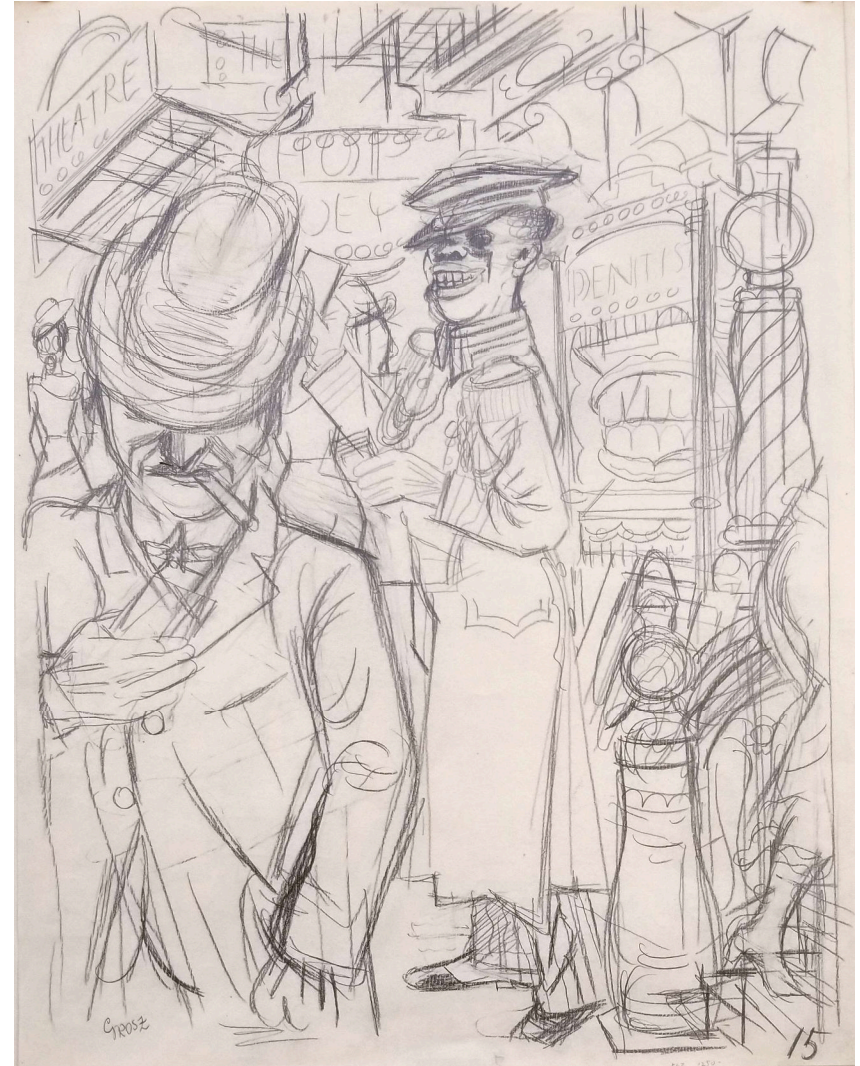
Set in downtown Broadway's theater district, *The Green Door* was created a year after Grosz arrived in New York, where he was welcomed as an internationally renowned artist. Just as he had critiqued the corruption and chaos in Germany between the wars, Grosz interpreted contemporary American society with an often acerbic or satirical tone.

This large and energetic drawing features a mysterious black man, handing out cards to passersby, and an archetypal Grosz figure with a hat and cigar. It is brimming with marvelous details, with a theater marquee in the background and a dentist's sign with an oversized set of teeth in a glass case.

In 1934, George Macy, publisher of the Limited Editions Club, commissioned Grosz to illustrate O. Henry's selected short stories. Ralph Jentsch writes, "With his short stories, often taking place in gloomy milieus, with heroes living at the edge of existence, the famous O. Henry achieved the reputation as a master of the literary twist. It was an ideal template for an artist like Grosz.having walked this Broadway area many times himself, Grosz introduces in [*The Green Door*], next to O. Henry's description, his own experiences. It is the swirling life of Broadway."



Read *The Green Door* by O. Henry



GEORGE BELLOWS

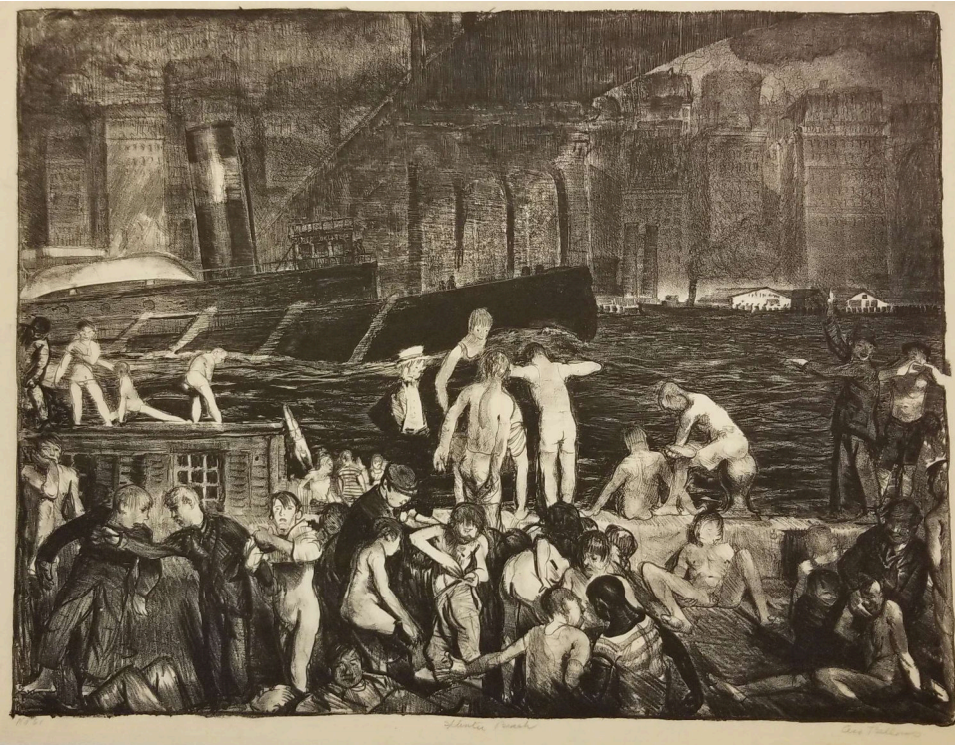
Splinter Beach, 1916

Lithograph on thin laid Japanese paper with full margins. Edition of 70.

Signed, titled and numbered 61 in pencil.

15 1/16 x 19 7/8 in : 38.3 x 50.5 cm

[more information](#)



"River Rats" cooling off in the East River, ca. 1929



An expert lithographer, George Bellows used a wide range of tonal values and expressive lines to obtain a gritty feel for the impoverished people he often portrayed. Inspired by the vitality of working-class New Yorkers, he visited them where they lived, played and worked to make his sketches.

"*Splinter Beach* is one of a significant series of illustrations that the artist produced for the socialist magazine *The Masses* in 1913. Based on single figure sketches, this lithograph captures the dynamism of young boys cavorting at a local swim spot. As the naked boys traipse along the East River under the Brooklyn Bridge and gather in the foreground, Bellows inserts a dense and dreary cityscape, reminding his viewers that the grimy riverside scene is far from a seafront vacation, but rather, an intimate observation of the stark reality of New York's lower class." (Dallas Museum of Fine Art)



ELI JACOBI

Cherries 5¢, 1935-40

Ryan 40. Linoleum block print on wove paper.

Published by the FAP/WPA. Signed and titled in pencil. Stamped

"Federal Art Project, NYC, WPA" and numbered 7 lower right.

8 13/16 x 11 15/16 in : 22.4 x 30.3 cm

[more information](#)

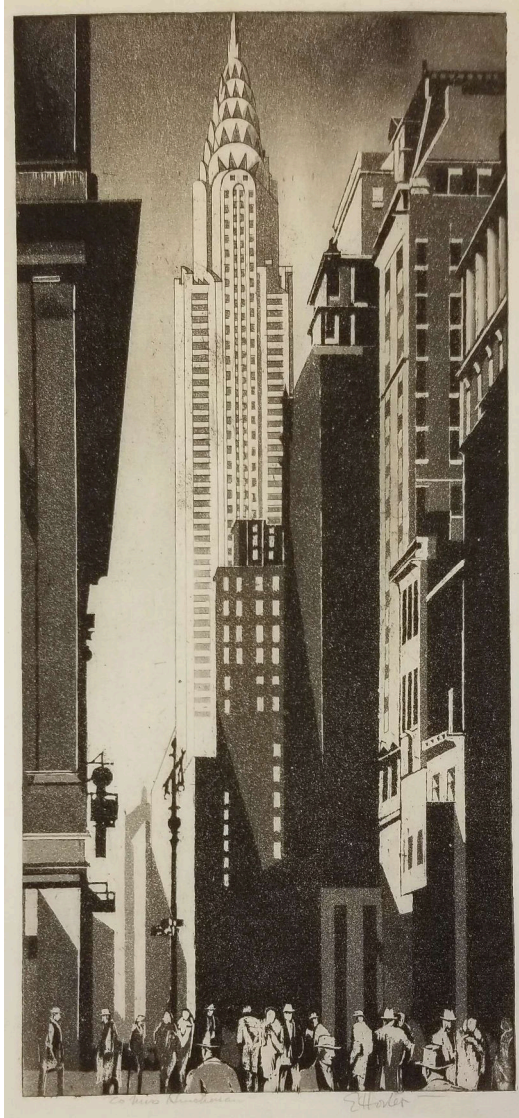


1936 Fruit Vendor Lower East Side, NYC. New York City Photo.

Jacobi worked as a freelance illustrator for magazines and numerous newspapers, including The New York Times and The New York World, but is best remembered for his work for the Graphic Arts Division of the WPA's Federal Art Project, where he specialized as a block printer. Inspiration for his prints was often found on the streets of The Bowery and showed how the Great Depression affected the people of New York City.



Cart vendors caused congestion on streets already brimming with pedestrians and automobiles, forcing police to shepherd them from high traffic locations. [Click to watch.](#)



EARL HORTER

Chrysler Building, ca. 1935

Etching and aquatint. Only a small number of proofs were printed. Very rare. Signed and annotated "To Miss Hinchman" in pencil.

11 13/16 x 5 7/8 in : 30 x 13.8 cm

[more information](#)

Originally trained as a draftsman, Horter made a career as an advertising illustrator. Horter's deep appreciation for geometric Precisionism was reflected in his famous collection of modern art, which included works by Charles Sheeler. A master of aquatint, the exceptionally rare *Chrysler Building* is his finest achievement in printmaking.

Unlike his predecessors, Horter chose to place the Chrysler Building in the background, yet it is a focal point bathed in the bright morning sun. The dark buildings in shadow bring your eye down to the people in the foreground rushing by on their way to work.

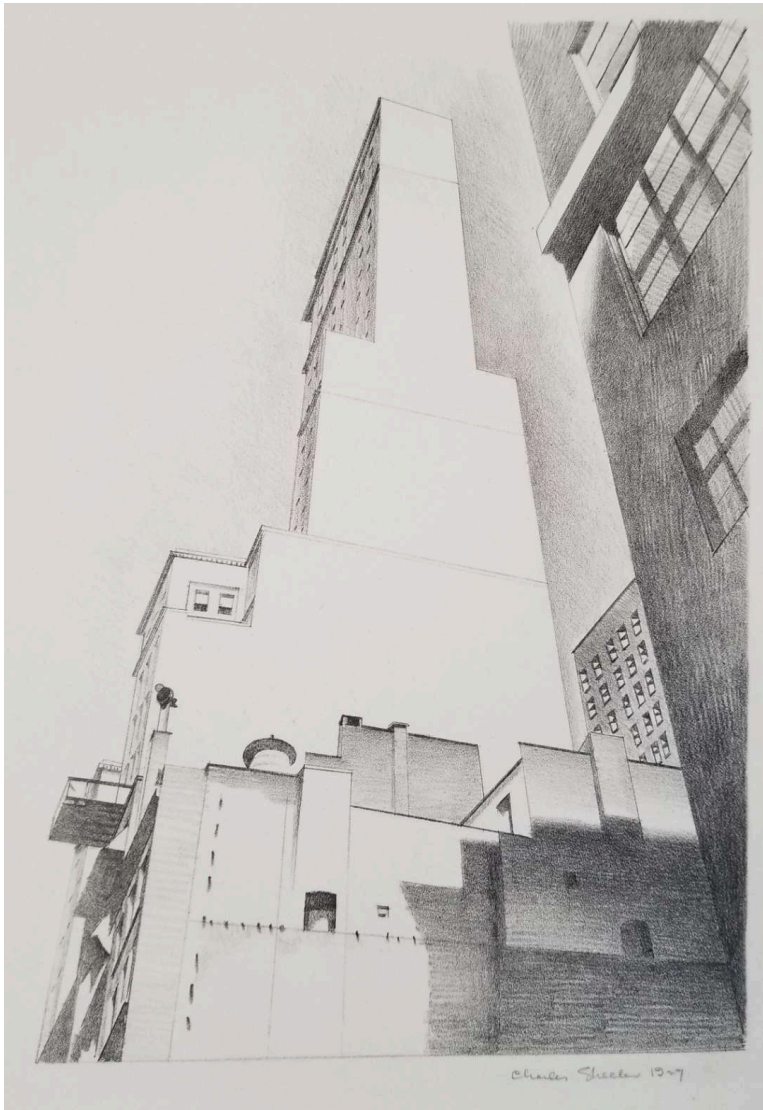


Chrysler Building 2020



The first exhibition of this print was at the First International Exhibition of Etching And Engraving at the Art Institute Of Chicago, March 24 - May 15, 1932

[Click here to see a PDF of the original catalogue including a pricelist of the prints in the show.](#)



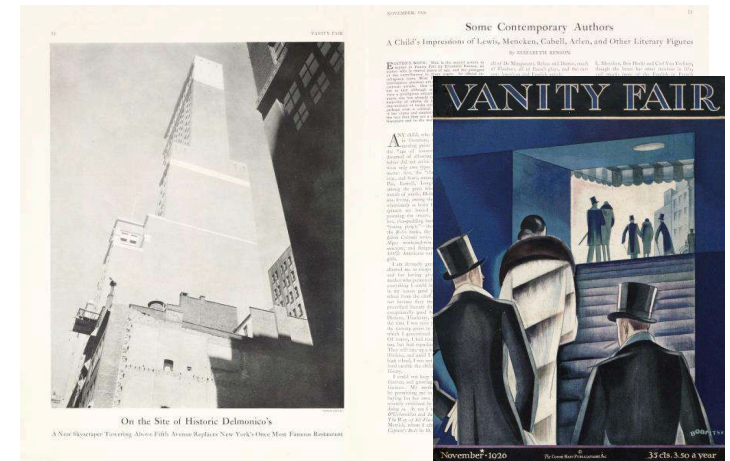
Sheeler chose an unexpected view of Manhattan's Central Mercantile Bank Building (known as the Delmonico Building after the restaurant that formerly occupied the site), situated at 5th Avenue and 44th Street. Its 36-story height is unimpressive now, but when it was built in 1926, it towered over the older, lower buildings on the block. Its angled profile was determined by a 1916 zoning law requiring skyscrapers' upper floors to be set back at intervals, allowing more sunlight to reach the streets below.

CHARLES SHEELER

Delmonico Building, 1926

Lithograph on wove paper, full margins. Edition of ca. 50. Printed by George C. Miller. Signed in pencil. 9 3/4 x 6 11/16 in : 24.8 x 17 cm

[more information](#)



The related photograph also by Sheeler was published in *Vanity Fair*, October 1926, p. 72, with the caption: "On the Site of Historic Delmonico's: A New Skyscraper Towering Above Fifth Avenue Replaces New York's Once Most Famous Restaurant".

JOLAN GROSS-BETTELHEIM

High Level Bridge with Cuyahoga River, ca. 1935

Lithograph on wove paper, full margins. Signed in pencil.

11 5/16 x 15 5/8 in : 28.7 x 39.7 cm

[more information](#)



Same view 2020

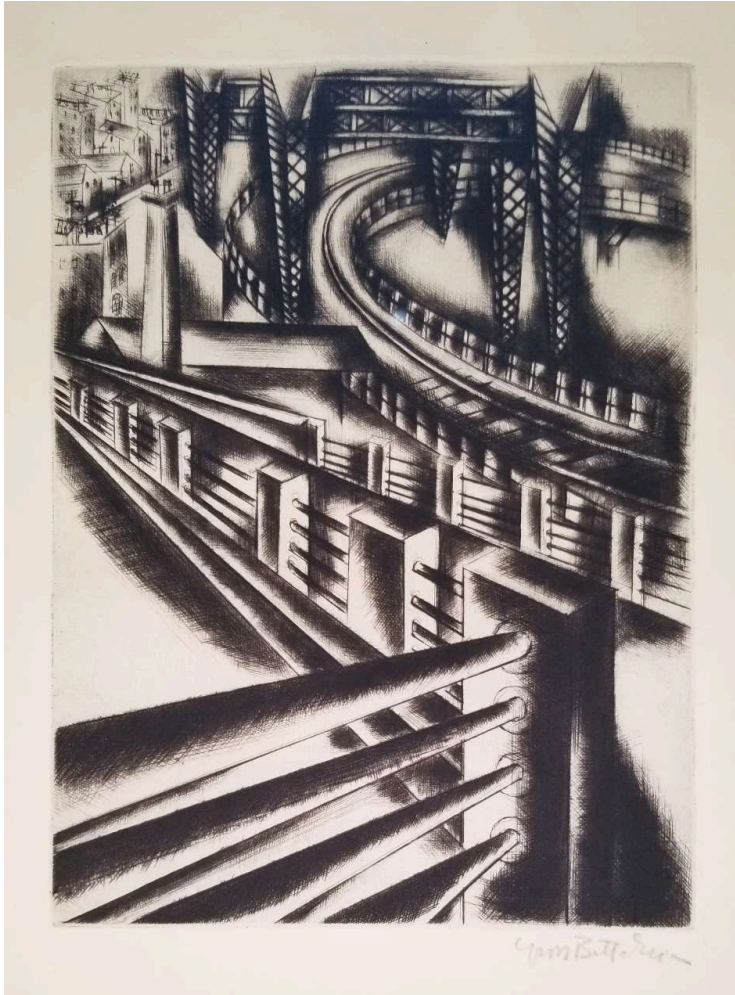
At the time of its completion in 1918, the High Level Bridge was the largest steel and concrete reinforced bridge in the world. Arriving in Cleveland in 1925, Gross-Bettelheim found inspiration in the mills, bridges, and factories around her.



Selected for the current [London Original Print Fair Collectors](#)

Choice, this print was described by Digby Warde-Aldam:

"Jolan Gross-Bettelheim envisions one of the colossal railway bridges crossing the Cuyahoga river as a structure pregnant with energy, so vast that it defies the confines of the image; the river below seems puny by comparison. Quite how she felt about it is ambiguous: is the light illuminating the cantilevers the glow of progress or the glimmer of hellfire?"



JOLAN GROSS-BETTELHEIM

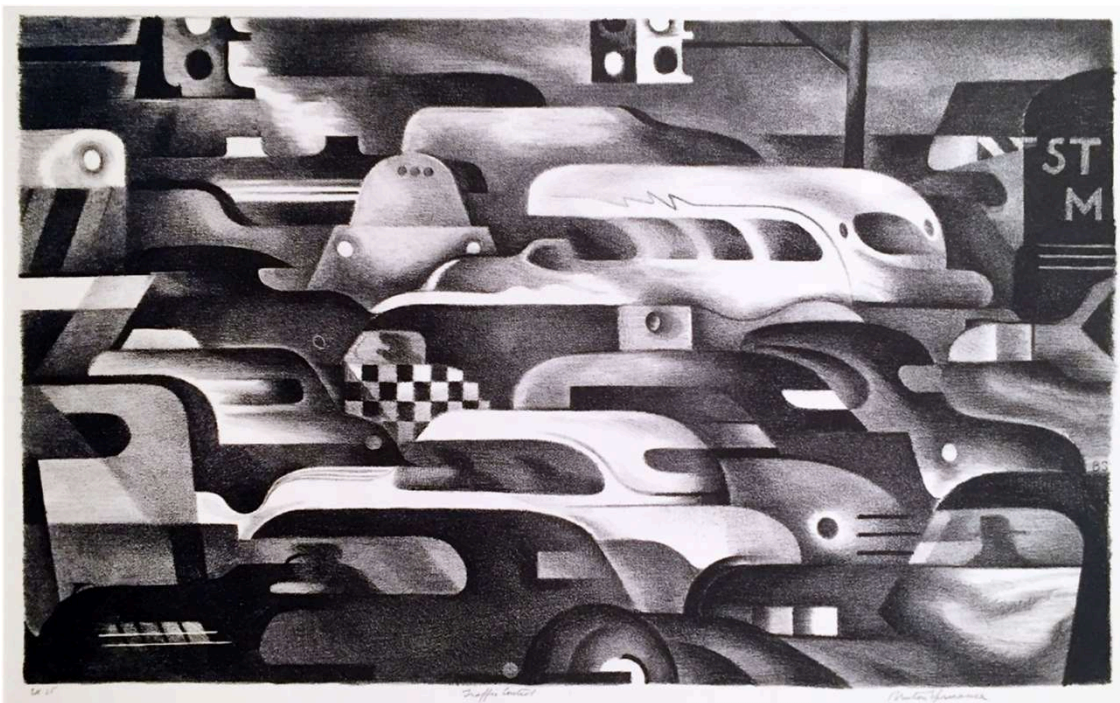
Industrial landscape II, ca. 1935

Gross-Bettelheim, Kecskemeti Galeria 1987, E.35.
Drypoint on laid paper. One of a small number of proofs. Signed in pencil.

11 5/16 x 15 5/8 in : 28.7 x 39.7 cm

[more information](#)

Jolan Gross-Bettelheim is renowned for her Depression era cityscapes, industrial scenes and WWII subjects. Repeated patterns and forceful diagonals enhance the dramatic impact. Her modernist prints often render recognizable, contemporary settings yet they usually were highly abstracted, influenced by the avant-garde art she had encountered in Europe: Cubism, Futurism and Constructivism. She simultaneously celebrated the curves and fluidity of the structures while recoiling from harsh intrusion of daily life.



DENTON SPRUANCE

Traffic Control, 1936

Lithograph on wove paper with full margins. Edition of 35.

Signed, titled, dated and inscribed "Ed. 35" in pencil.

9 x 14 3/8 in : 22.9 x 36.5 cm

[more information](#)

In *Traffic Control*, Spruance portrays the pulsating rhythm of speeding cars in traffic. Beneath a pair of directional lights, a mass of speeding vehicles in profile fill the composition, the lines of simplified vehicular forms overlapping and blending one into the other with no space between. The impossible stacking of cars and trucks is a claustrophobic vision of motor traffic.



The horizon line, found high on the picture plane, offers little visual escape. Spruance's title is satirical, as there is limited ability to control the rush of moving vehicles. Intended as a condemnation of the accelerated speeds of motorists in contemporary cities, *Traffic Control* can also be read as a warning to pedestrians.

(AUTO-AMERICA: THE AUTOMOBILE AND AMERICAN ART, CIRCA 1900-1950
By Jerry N. Smith, Copyright 2012)



DENTON SPRUANCE

Road from the Shore, 1936

Fine & Looney 130. Lithograph on wove paper, full margins. Edition of 25.

Signed, titled, dated and numbered in pencil.

10 1/8 x 14 7/16 in : 25.72 x 36.67 cm

[more information](#)



The unavoidable certainty of a collision is featured in Spruance's *Road from the Shore*. From a bird's-eye view looking at a filling station at night, elongated cars are shown with directional lines streaming off them to indicate high rates of speed. The automobiles are exaggeratedly crammed together on the roadway, with two appearing to race toward one another, a split second from a head-on collision. Hovering over the scene with its arms spread wide is the caped, skeletal figure of Death. The composition is a stark warning to motorists about the dangers associated with automobiles of the time.

BENTON SPRUANCE

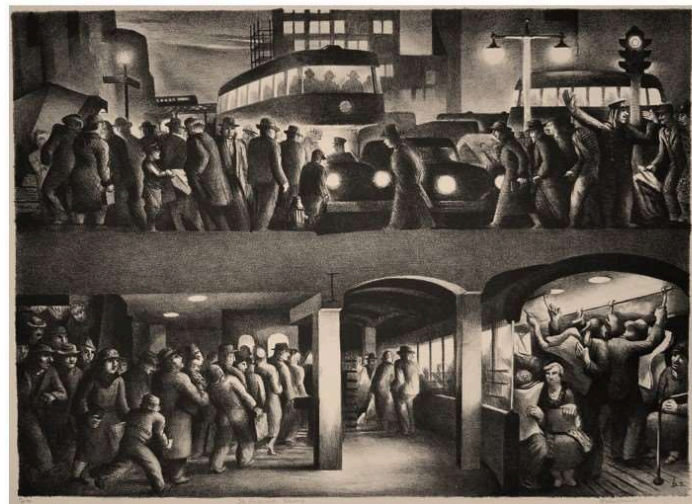
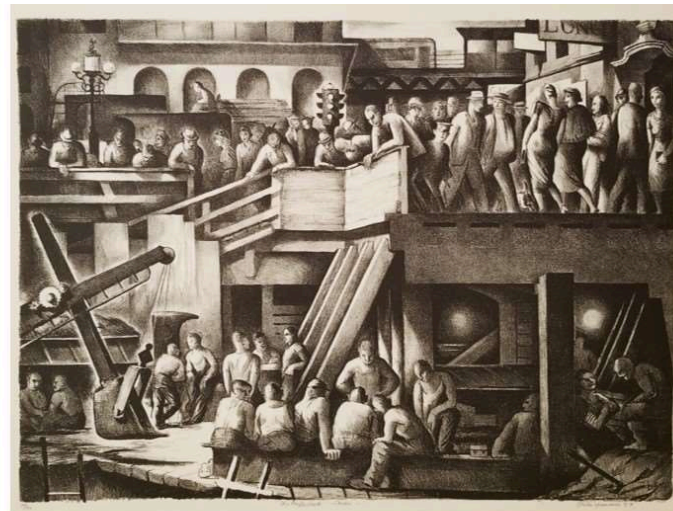
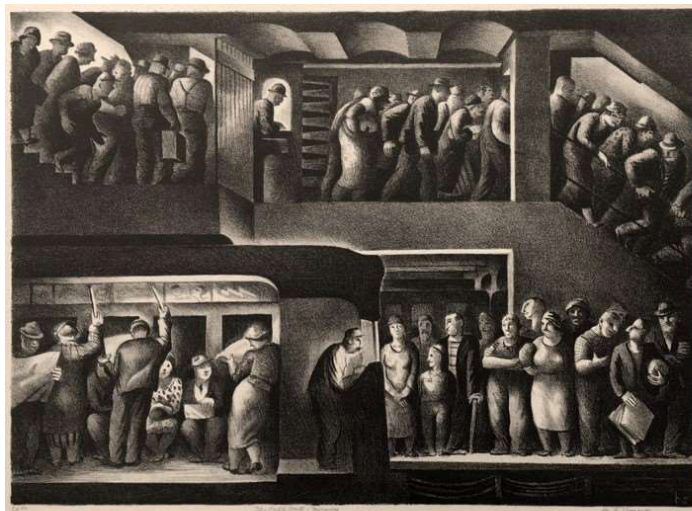
The People Work, 1937

The rare complete set of four lithographs, printed on RIVES paper with full margins, accompanied by the signed and inscribed colophon.

13 5/8 x 19 1/8 in : 34.6 x 48.3 cm

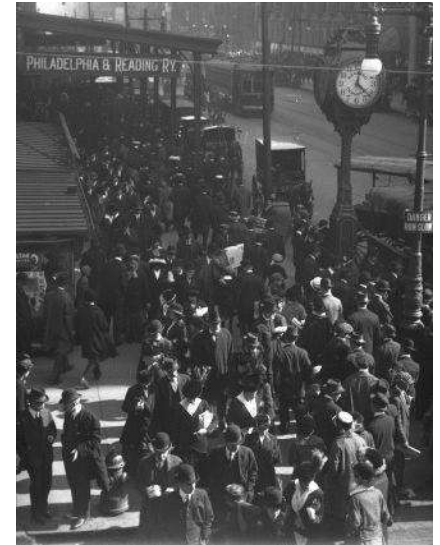
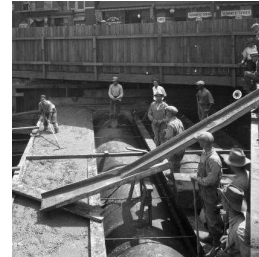
[more information](#)

In 1937, after much preliminary study and revision, Spruance issued a set of four large lithographs titled *The People Work*. While Spruance was making these lithographs, his hometown of Philadelphia was extending the Broad Street Subway. Although there were several rapid transit systems in operation at that time, Spruance likely based this on the local system but aimed to represent a generalized idea of the modern American city.





The specific architecture of the subway tunnels and streetlight design reinforce the idea that Spruance's images drew on local Philadelphian life.

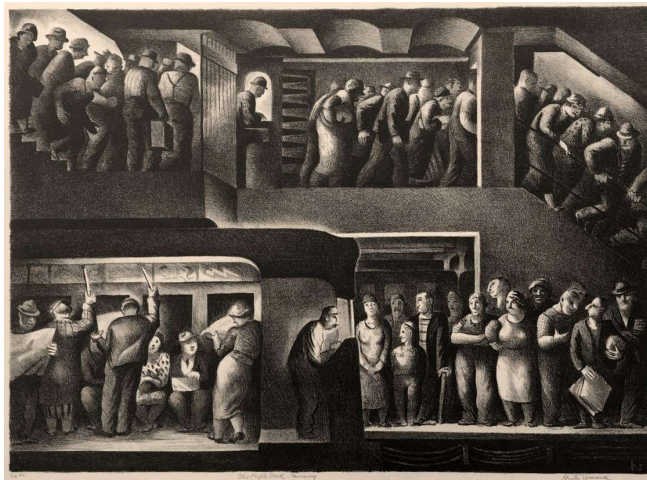


Spruance's *Morning* shows the early rush hour and highlights the intermingling of strangers from all walks of life in the urban ritual of riding public transit to work.

Using a cross-section composition, Spruance's *Noon* juxtaposes two levels of concurrent activities that characterize ordinary American city life at noon, moving about on city streets and having lunch. It reveals two strata of urban society, office workers and laborers.

Henri Marceau, then Assistant Director at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, wrote the following caption for this print in the colophon: "Clanking subway turnstiles, platforms swaying, smells, uneasy strap hangers, and the press—always newspapers."

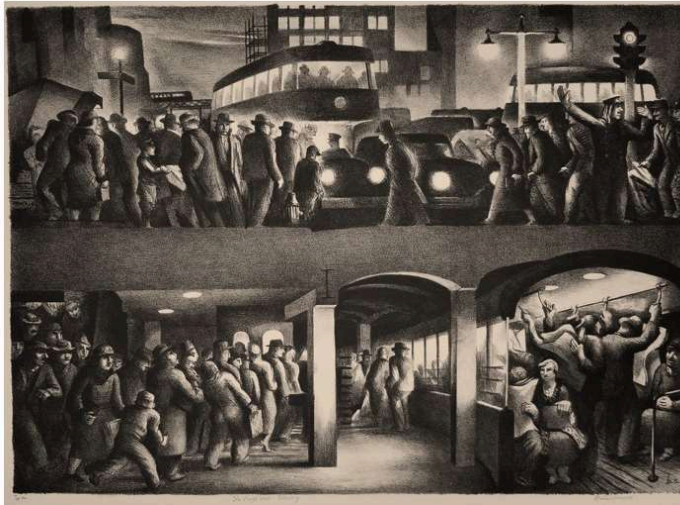
[Link to Colophon Page.](#)



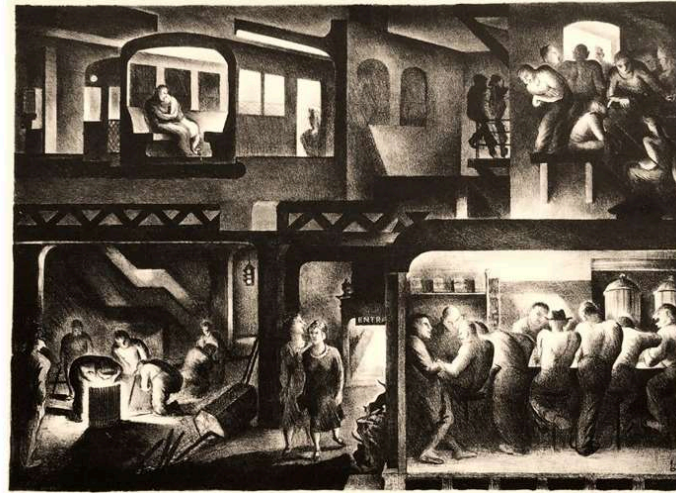
Henri Marceau offered an evocative caption for this print: "Rush and black hands, a hasty sandwich, steaming, hissing shovels—construction."

[Link to Colophon Page.](#)

Henri Marceau, then Assistant Director at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, wrote the following caption for this print: "Weary minds homeward bound, traffic with its toll—straphangers—the press."
[Link to Colophon Page](#)



The top half of *Evening* shows a darkening city illuminated by lights, and a policeman directs traffic as bustling pedestrians cross the street in front of a double-decker bus and cars. At the upper left, some pedestrians gather at the subway entrance to join the throng descending to the subway platform. At the lower right, you see an overcrowded subway car, many of its riders absorbed in their newspapers.



In *Night*, Spruance presents several vignettes of typical nighttime activities occurring simultaneously in an urban setting: a couple snuggling in a deserted elevated train car; party revelers lounging on a second-floor balcony; workmen gathering in a subway bar, outside of which two cats sniff at a garbage can; and two women passing a group of street repairmen working beneath the train tracks.



Marceau's caption: "Work for some, others pleasure bent—tomorrow it begins again. A Paradise?"
[Link to Colophon Page](#)

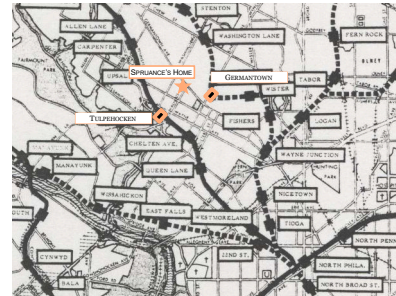
BENTON SPRUANCE

Approach to the Station, 1932

Lithograph on laid paper. Edition of 28. Signed, titled, dated and numbered 15/28 in pencil.

11 x 13 7/8 in : 27.9 x 35.2 cm

[more information](#)



Double click to zoom the map.



Germantown Station, ca. 1932

Not just a random train station, this was the station in Philadelphia that Spruance used in his daily commute. Although there is no written documentation, there are clues he integrated into the print that lead to this conclusion: Spruance lived at 45 Walnut Lane in Germantown, located almost equidistant from two stations, Germantown and Tulpehocken, whose street name you see on the right of the print under the streetlight.

It is the Germantown station that has the same curve in its tracks as the print, and it provided direct routes to the University of the Arts and his printer Theodore Cuno's home-based printing studio. The curve in the rails, the hurtling train and radiating lines give the viewer a sense of movement.

BENTON SPRUANCE

Highway Holiday, 1934-35

Lithograph on wove paper, watermarked FRANCE with full margins. Edition of 35. Signed, titled, dated and numbered in pencil.

10 1/8 x 14 7/16 in : 25.72 x 36.67 cm

[more information](#)

Speeding automobiles drive over fallen bodies in two versions of Spruance's *Highway Holiday*. One print features a skeletal driver and passengers in a hurtling vehicle in what is thought to be a rural setting. In this version, the windows of the vehicle are opaque, and the scene is activated by a hand reaching up from a pile of corpses beneath the cars' wheels. The electronic traffic light signifies an urban setting.

(AUTO-AMERICA: THE AUTOMOBILE AND AMERICAN ART, CIRCA 1900-1950 By Jerry N. Smith, Copyright 2012)



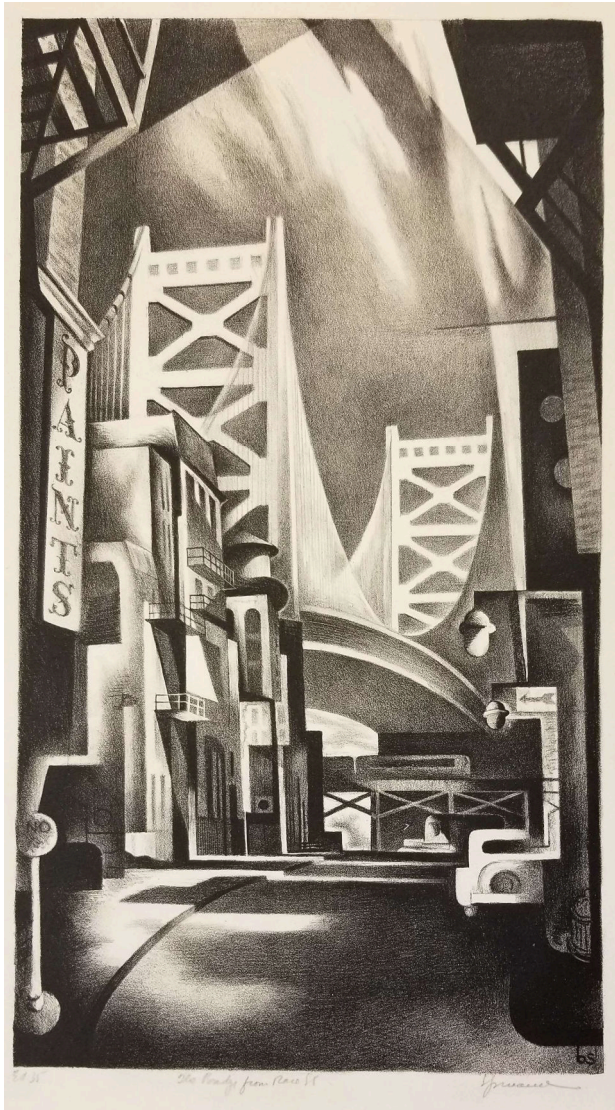
Spruance produced several lithographs featuring automobiles not only for social commentary, but also because he believed that automobile imagery was rarely used as subject matter in artwork.



[Click to read about the "Loose Nut Behind the Wheel"](#)



[An article about road safety in the 1930s.](#)



BENTON SPRUANCE

The Bridge from Race Street, 1939

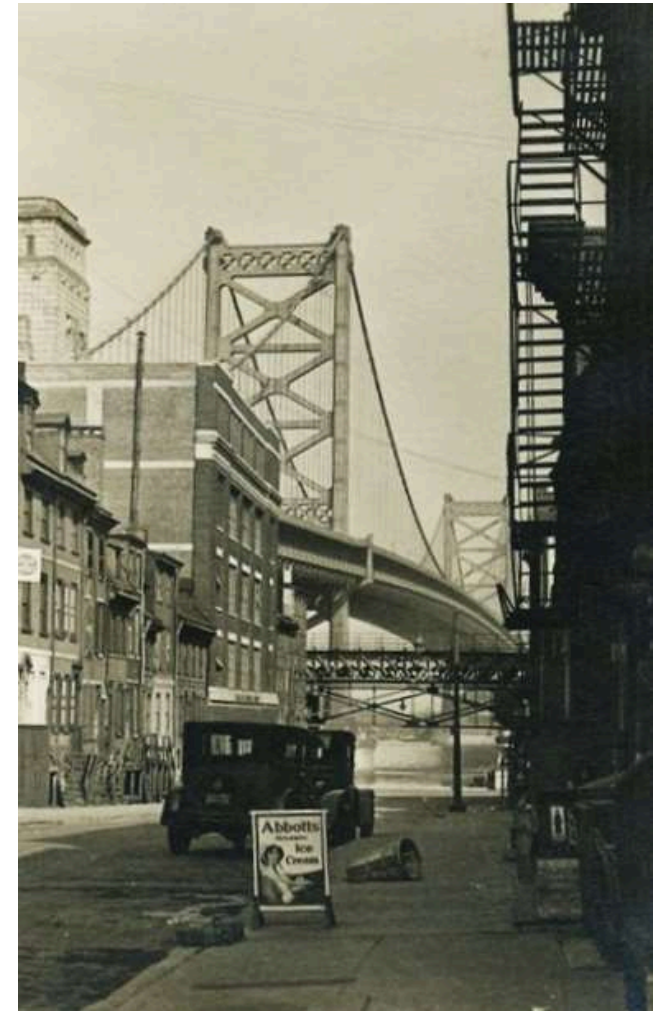
Lithograph on Rives wove paper. Edition of 35.

Printed by Theodore Cuno. Signed, titled, and inscribed Ed. 35 in pencil.

15 3/16 x 8 1/2 in : 38.6 x 21.6 cm

[more information](#)

What brought Spruance to Race Street? In addition to the stunning swoop and angles of the Delaware Bridge (later renamed the Benjamin Franklin Bridge), perhaps it was business at the Lithographic Building located at 205-217 Race Street, where artists shared their skills with students and met with others to discuss the arts. Or perhaps the paint sold by Shoemaker's Drug and Paint located on the 300 block of Race Street was his preferred paint.



Race Street, ca. 1939



JAMES ALLEN

The Builders, 1932

Etching, aquatint and drypoint on laid paper.

Edition of 100. Signed in pencil.

9 7/8 x 11 7/8 in : 25.1 x 30.2 cm

[more information](#)

After photography became the most popular documentary mode in the early 1900s, some artists were inspired by current photography. *The Builders* directly borrowed, or at least strongly echoed, Lewis Hines' photographs of the construction of the Empire State Building. Allen worked out his figures by drawing models in the studio, often creating life-size charcoal studies for his prints. For *The Builders*, Allen called in a construction site foreman to check his accuracy before allowing the plate to be printed. (Mary Ryan Gallery, 1984). *The Builders* was Allen's first print to earn him awards and recognition. It was published as the cover for the Herald Tribune Magazine in 1933 and for the cover of the Sunday Review Brooklyn Eagle the following year.



Who were these builders? Click to hear about these fearless men.



Lewis Hines in action during construction of the Empire State Building





LOUIS LOZOWICK

Crane, 1928

Lithograph. Edition of 15. Very rare.
Signed and numbered 3/15 in pencil.
12 3/8 x 8 7/8 in : 31.4 x 22.5 cm

[more information](#)

“The dominant trend in America of today...is towards order and organization, which find their outward sign and symbol in the rigid geometry of the American city: in the verticals of its smokestacks, in the parallels of its car tracks, the squares of its streets, the cubes of its factories, the arc of its bridges, the cylinders of its gas tanks”, wrote Louis Lozowick (*The Prints of Louis Lozowick, by Janet Flint*)

Lozowick’s words are echoed in the hard-edged forms and dramatic foreshortening in *Crane*. Esther Adler, MOMA’s Associate Curator, spoke about this print: “It’s very geometric. You get these really strong verticals and horizontals. I think from a contemporary viewpoint this kind of thing seems a bit scary. But that probably wasn’t Lozowick’s intention or his point of view at the time. For him, technological advances and the machine were a great accomplishment of modern American society, really something to be celebrated as unique and important contributions. And this was a vantage point he shared with a lot of other artists and people in America at the time.”



Margaret Bourke-White
**Unloading Coal for a Freighter,
Duluth, 1930**
Gelatin silver print (see following page)



MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE

Unloading Coal for a Freighter, Duluth, 1930

Gelatin silver print.

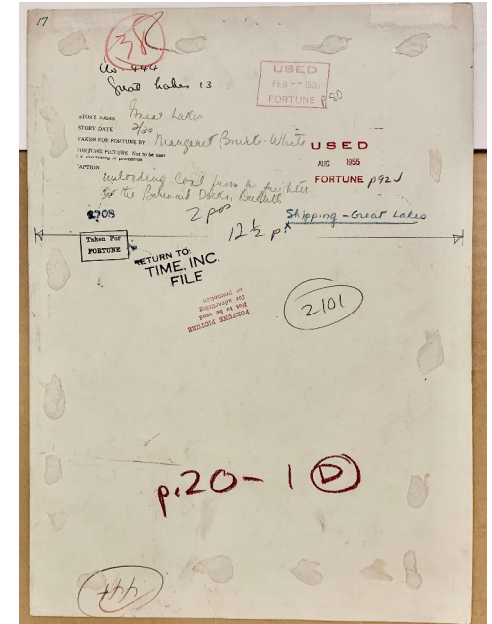
13.4x 9.8 in : 34 x 24.8 cm

[email for more information](#)

Bourke-White's first photo series in the *Fortune* February 1930 issue featured shipping and industry in the Great Lakes region, titled "Trade Routes Across the Great Lakes". She was already largely committed to photographing the industrial world. She also became notable for photographing the changing scenes in the Soviet Union in 1930, as "the first foreign photographer to have unlimited access to the Soviet Union."

Interestingly, Bourke-White was the only woman to live in one of the Chrysler tower's handful of apartments. At that time, Landlord Walter P. Chrysler wouldn't rent to women — not even a woman who risked her life to take iconic photos while perched on one of the tower's 59th-floor gargoyles — so her employer, Time Inc. signed the lease for her.

[\(Fortune Magazine\)](#)



The stamps and markings on the back include the title, date, and many publishers that used the photo over the years. Double click to zoom in.



Margaret Bourke-White
aged 25, 1929
Photograph taken by
Berenice Abbott

LOUIS LOZOWICK

Hanover Square, 1929

Lithograph on wove paper. Edition of

25. Signed and dated in pencil.

14 5/8 x 8 7/8 in : 37.1 x 22.5 cm

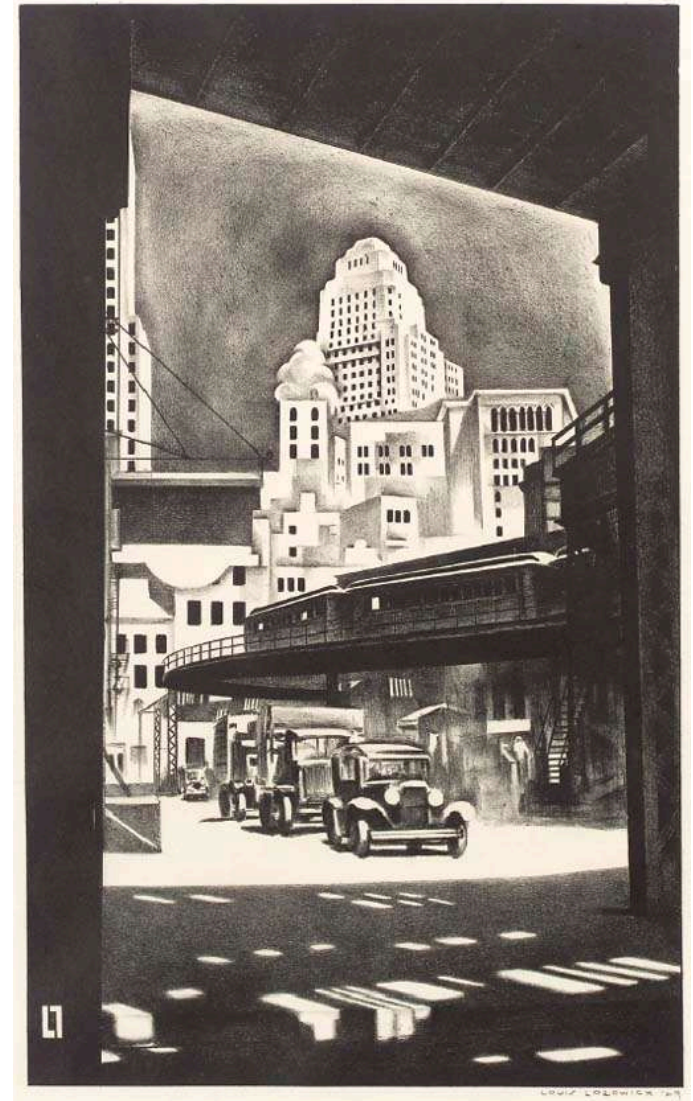
[more information](#)



Hanover Square, view of the 3rd Avenue El, ca. 1929

Drawing from the real world, Lozowick was known to carry sketchbooks with him on daily outings, a small one for quick sketches and a larger one for more finished studies. Perhaps one morning in 1929, Lozowick made his way from his apartment on Lexington and 61st to the 3rd Avenue El. Imagine he hopped on for a 21-minute ride to Hanover Square, where he was inspired by the bold geometric patterns made by the tracks and shadows.

"The graphic artist converts a three-dimensional multi-colored world into a two-dimensional world of lights and darks. And it is the manner in which this conversion is accomplished by the effective distribution and arrangement of black, gray, and white areas, lines and spots that distinguishes the good lithograph from the bad," wrote Louis Lozowick.



LOUIS LOZOWICK

Hell Gate Bridge, 1928

Lithograph on wove paper, full margins.

Edition of ca. 50. Printed by George C. Miller.

With the original Weyhe Gallery label. Signed

in pencil.

9 3/4 x 6 11/16 in : 24.8 x 17 cm

[more information](#)



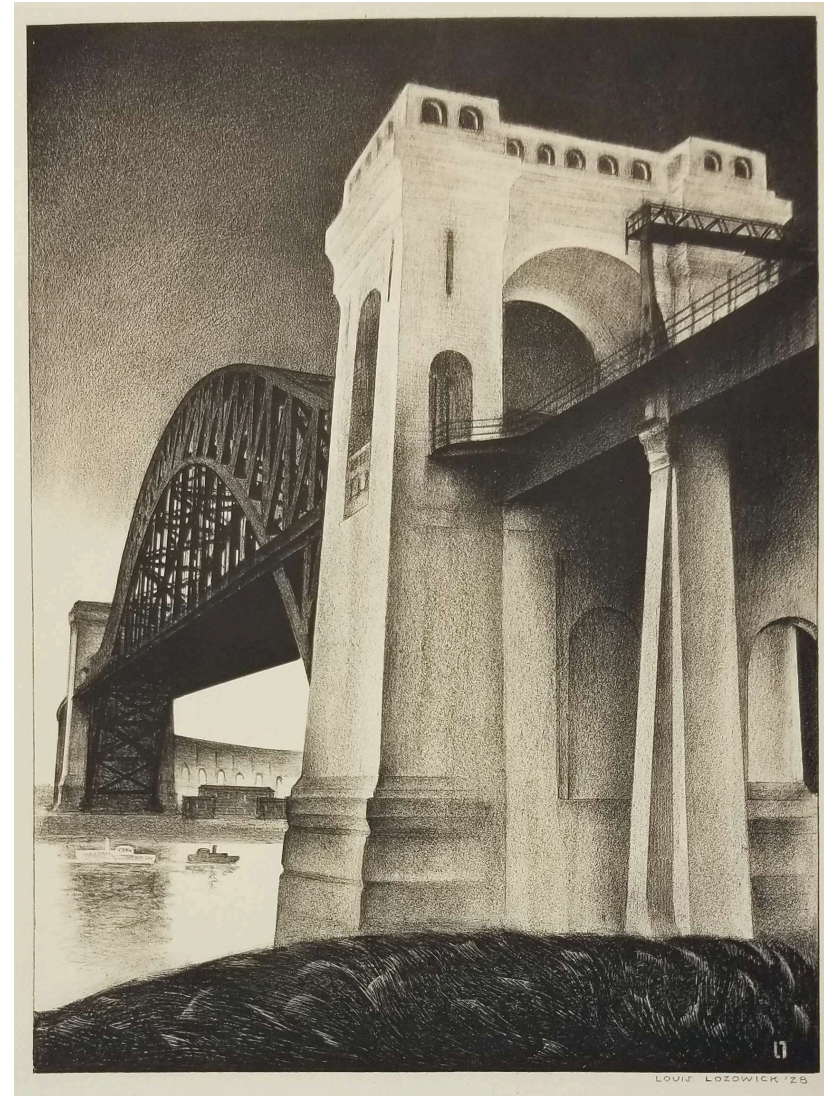
"The engineer and architect didn't just want to build a bridge. They wanted the bridge to look a particular way. The stone towers are really only decorative. They don't have any structural function. But they had those stone towers built because they felt they made it look right", wrote Allen Renz, the grandson of the civil engineer who built the bridge, *New York Times*, March 2017.

"Lozowick usually worked from highly finished drawings but this was one in which he made a stone side change. The tower went from being "an emphatic dark form against a light sky to a light form against a dark sky -- through a process of additions and scrapings with a knife and sandpaper". (*The Prints of Louis Lozowick* by Janet Flint)

Hell Gate Bridge is the main structure in a rail link between the Bronx and Queens. Built in 1917, it became an essential connector in the heavily traveled Northeast rail corridor between Washington and Boston, and it was all about convenience. Previously, passengers traveling from Washington to Boston, for example, had to take one train to Jersey City, a ferry to Manhattan, find Grand Central Terminal and catch another train to New England. This bridge changed it all.

Lozowick elongated and exaggerated the foreshortening of the tower to strengthen the vertical thrust.

Photo from the U S Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Co.



SAMUEL MARGOLIES

Builders of Babylon, 1937

Etching and aquatint on wove paper. Edition of 250 published by the Associate American Artists, New York. Signed in pencil. 14 ¼ x 11 in. : 36.2 x 27.9cm

[more information](#)

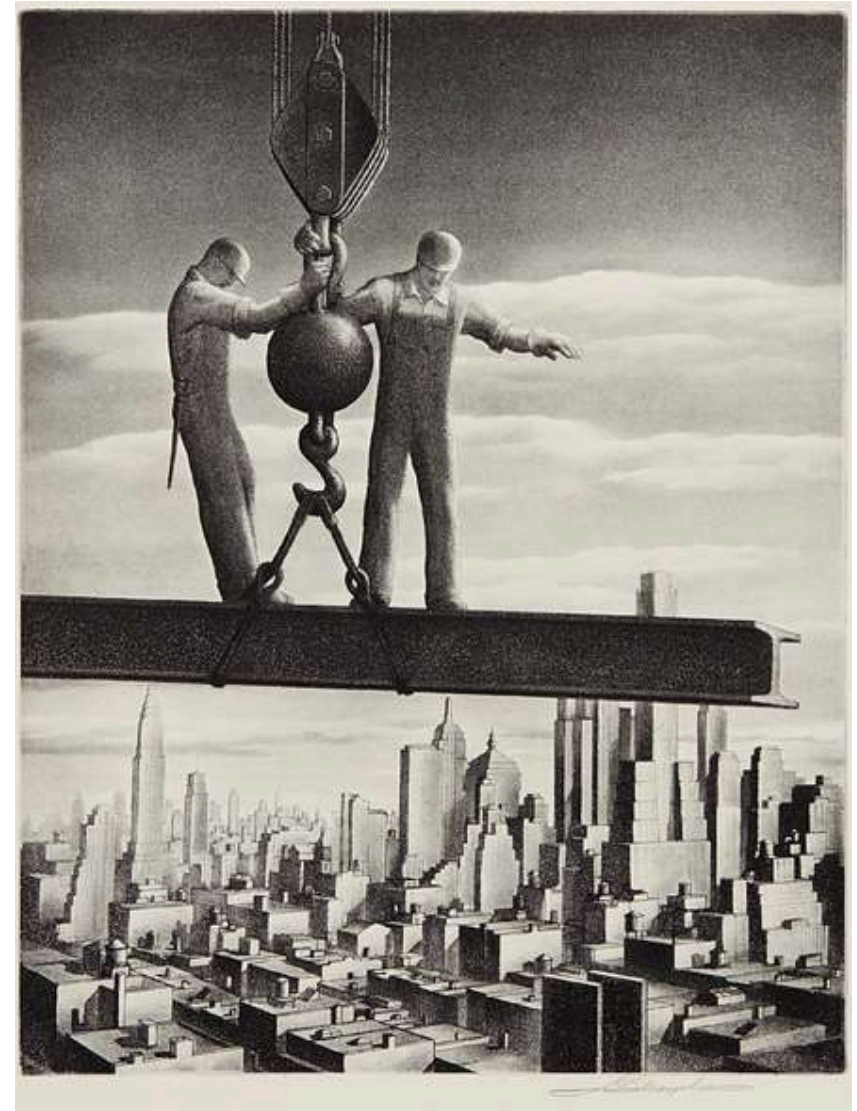


Margolies was known to have used the construction of the Empire State Building as a subject for his etchings. This was probably due in part to the unique bird's eye view he had from his studio on the 25th floor of the World's Tower Building located in midtown.

Construction photograph
by Lewis Hines



Margolies worked from the 25th and top floor of the World's Tower Building on West 40th Street in Manhattan. From his studio's quatrefoil windows, the artist looked out over Bryant Park and the New York Public Library. More importantly, the skyscrapers that workers were building all around him supplied the subject matter for his art.



SAMUEL MARGOLIES

Men of Steel, 1941

Drypoint and etching on wove paper. Edition of 250 published by the Associated American Artists, NY. Signed in pencil.

14 7/8 x 11 3/4 in : 37.8 x 29.9 cm

[more information](#)



Around 1940, Margolies was commissioned by Associated American Artists to create etchings. The artist's granddaughter wrote, "The Associated American Artists had better luck [selling prints to every home] if they stuck to innocuous fare." This meant that not only did important modernist prints like *Men of Steel* go out into the world, but so did the more popular snowy rural landscapes that his granddaughter called "shlock". Increasingly disappointed that the public paid little attention to the dynamic cityscapes, Margolies published a tirade in a local Queens newsletter titled: "Is There Something Wrong With the People of Queens?" This led to his ousting from the neighborhood and eventually being ostracized by his family.

[\(New York Times, Jane Margolies, April 2016\)](#)



Associated American Artists, a private company established during the Depression, sought to promote artists and their work and at the same time convince everyday Americans that fine art had a place in their homes.

Double click to zoom.





JOHN TAYLOR ARMS

West 42nd Street (the corner of 5th Avenue towards 6th), 1920

Fletcher 41. Etching on wove paper, full margins.

Edition of 75. Signed in pencil.

13 1/8 x 10 1/2 in : 33.3 x 26.7 cm

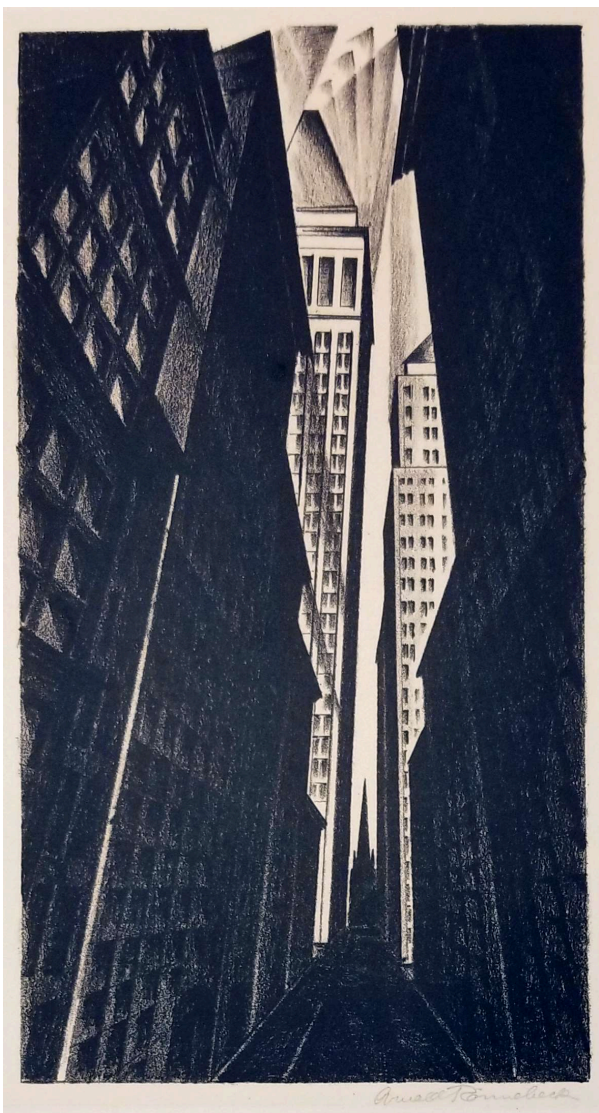
[more information](#)

John Taylor Arms received an etching kit as a Christmas gift from his new wife and by 1919 had decided to make etching his life's work. In *West Forty-Second Street*, Arms captured his favorite midtown Manhattan buildings. On the left is the north façade of the New York Public Library, a major landmark designed by the architectural firm Carrère and Hastings, where Arms had started an early career as an architectural draftsman.

Beyond the library is the Gothic Revival designed Bush Tower. Arms was passionate about Gothic architecture that was the focus of many of his European prints. The Bush Tower is still in the same location but is now blocked from view by a modern skyscraper. The Sixth Avenue elevated train station in the print no longer exists. In contrast to other artists who captured the towers of Manhattan from a distance, Arms placed the viewer in the midst of midtown's architectural glamour.



West 42nd Street with the New York Public Library to the left and the Bush Tower in the background, ca. 1920.



ARNOLD RONNEBECK

Wall Street, 1925

Lithograph on wove BFK paper with full margins.

From a small edition. Signed in pencil.

12 7/16 x 6 1/16 in : 31.6 x 15.4 cm

[more information](#)



SCULPTURE, DRAWINGS
AND LITHOGRAPHS BY
ARNOLD RONNEBECK
APRIL TWENTY-SEVENTH TO MAY SIXTEENTH
THE WEYHE GALLERY
794 LEXINGTON AVE., NEW YORK

Arnold Ronnebeck's *Wall Street* captures the dramatic visual effect of a skyscraper-lined canyon in the heart of the financial district in Lower Manhattan. From deep shadows to brilliant light, the scene emphasizes the unrelenting geometry of modern urban architecture. In the far distance is the spire of the historic Trinity Church, a Gothic-revival Episcopal parish church completed in 1846.

Wall Street was included in his first private exhibition at the Weyhe Gallery in New York in the spring of 1925. Double click to zoom in.

Library of Congress, Detroit Publishing Company Collection

Berenice Abbott:
Exchange Place,
New York 1933
Gelatin Silver Print
– not for sale



ARNOLD RONNEBECK

Columbus Circle, 1929

Lithograph on Rives wove paper, full margins.
Edition of 50. Signed, dated, titled and
numbered.

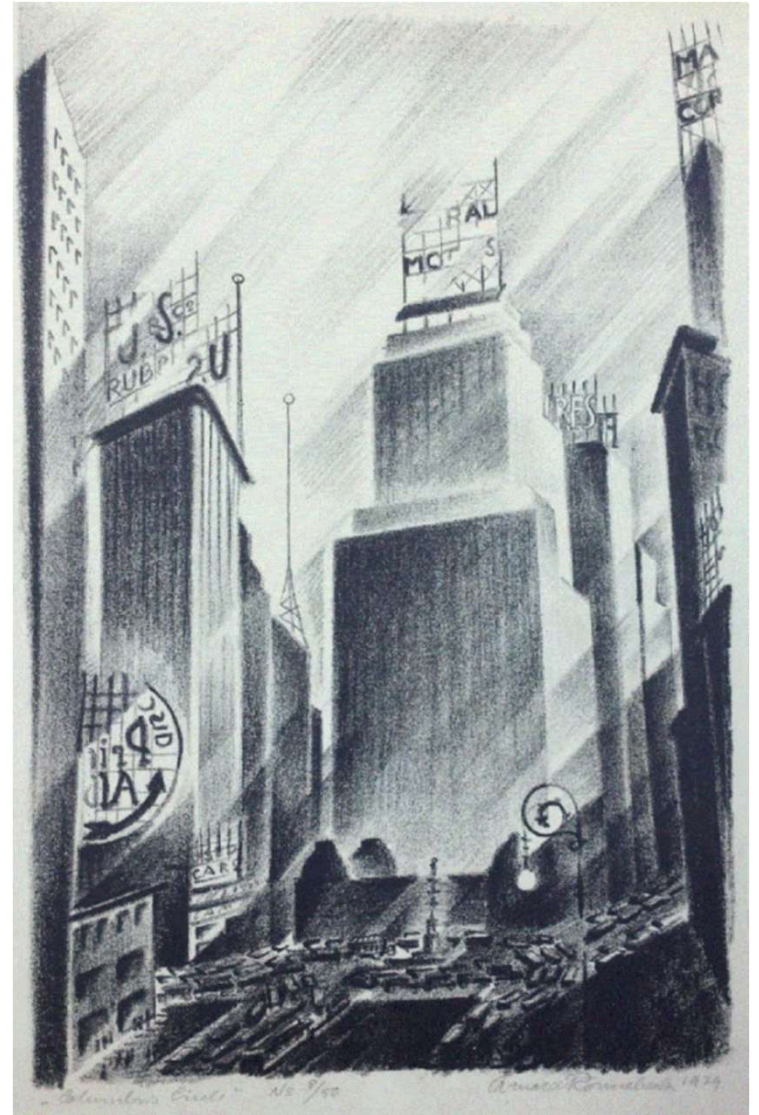
12 x 8 in : 31 x 21 cm

[more information](#)

At the time Rönnebeck made this print, he had moved from Manhattan to Colorado after accepting the position of Director of the Denver Art Museum. In the early 1920s, he was enchanted by the skyscrapers of New York, which Rönnebeck termed "living cubism." In March of 1929 he likely visited New York for the opening of Ralph Walker's exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Man's Study for a Country House*, in which he exhibited a sculpture, *The Dancer* (1921).



Columbus Circle photograph taken
from an elevated view. ca.1929





HOWARD COOK *Downtown, NY, 1928*

Duffy 80. Etching on wove paper.
Edition of 50 (only 25 were printed).
Very rare. Signed and titled in pencil.
9 x 6 in. : 22.86 x 15.24 cm

[more information](#)



Photo Credits: Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, The New York Public Library. "Manhattan: Broad Street - Exchange Place" *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*. 1931.

1931 Original photo (above); Mirror image of photo (below)

Regardless of the distinctive building in the background, the location of Cook's *Downtown, NY* was a challenge to pinpoint. The photo to the right, which looks exactly like the print, is a mirror image of the actual photo (above). Unlike artists who meticulously reversed the image drawn on the plate in order to render their print true to life, Cook drew the image directly onto the etching plate, producing the printed image in reverse.

The arched entranceway in the foreground is unidentifiable and could be loosely based on Penn Station or the now abandoned City Hall subway station. A glimpse of a raised train bridge to the right of the archway is a clue that perhaps it was a part of the EI which is no longer in existence. In any case, the exaggerated arch provides a dramatic contrast to the geometric and tilted architectural forms.



Take a tour of New York City in the 1930s from Battery Park to Park Avenue including most of the places featured in the Spirit of the American City.

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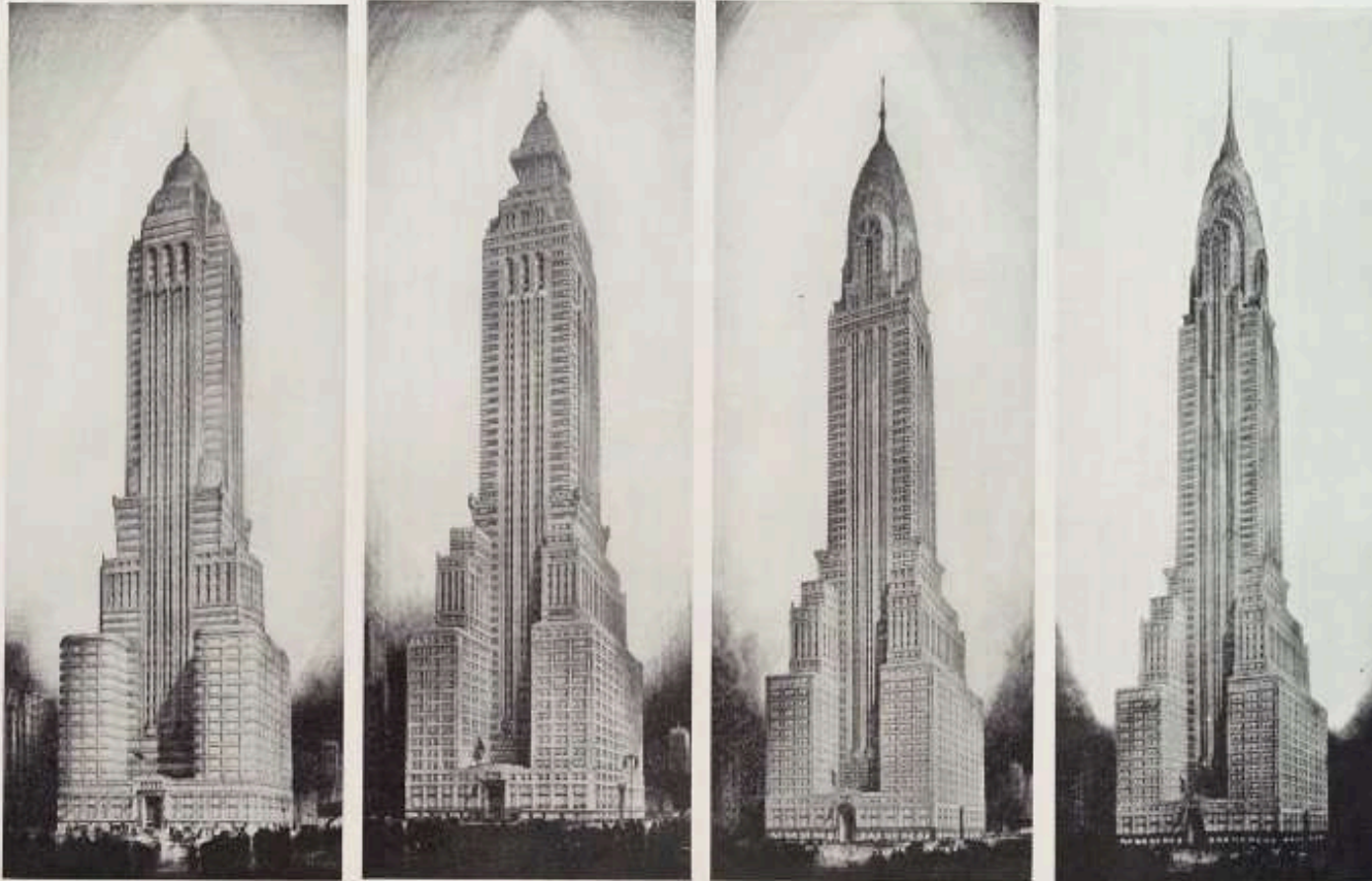


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REFERENCES



STAGES IN THE DESIGN FOR THE CHRYSLER BUILDING—FINAL STAGE IS SHOWN AT THE RIGHT—WILLIAM VAN ALLEN, ARCHITECT

Materials are used in an interesting way in this building as follows: First story and entrances in black granite; second and third stories in Georgia marble; black, white, and gray brick above with some Georgia marble inlay, copings and entire top features in Nicotia Steel; spandrels from 19th to 22nd stories in ornamental aluminum.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHRYSLER BUILDING

[Return to Chrysler Building](#)

FOOTAGE OF NEW YORK HARBOR 1930

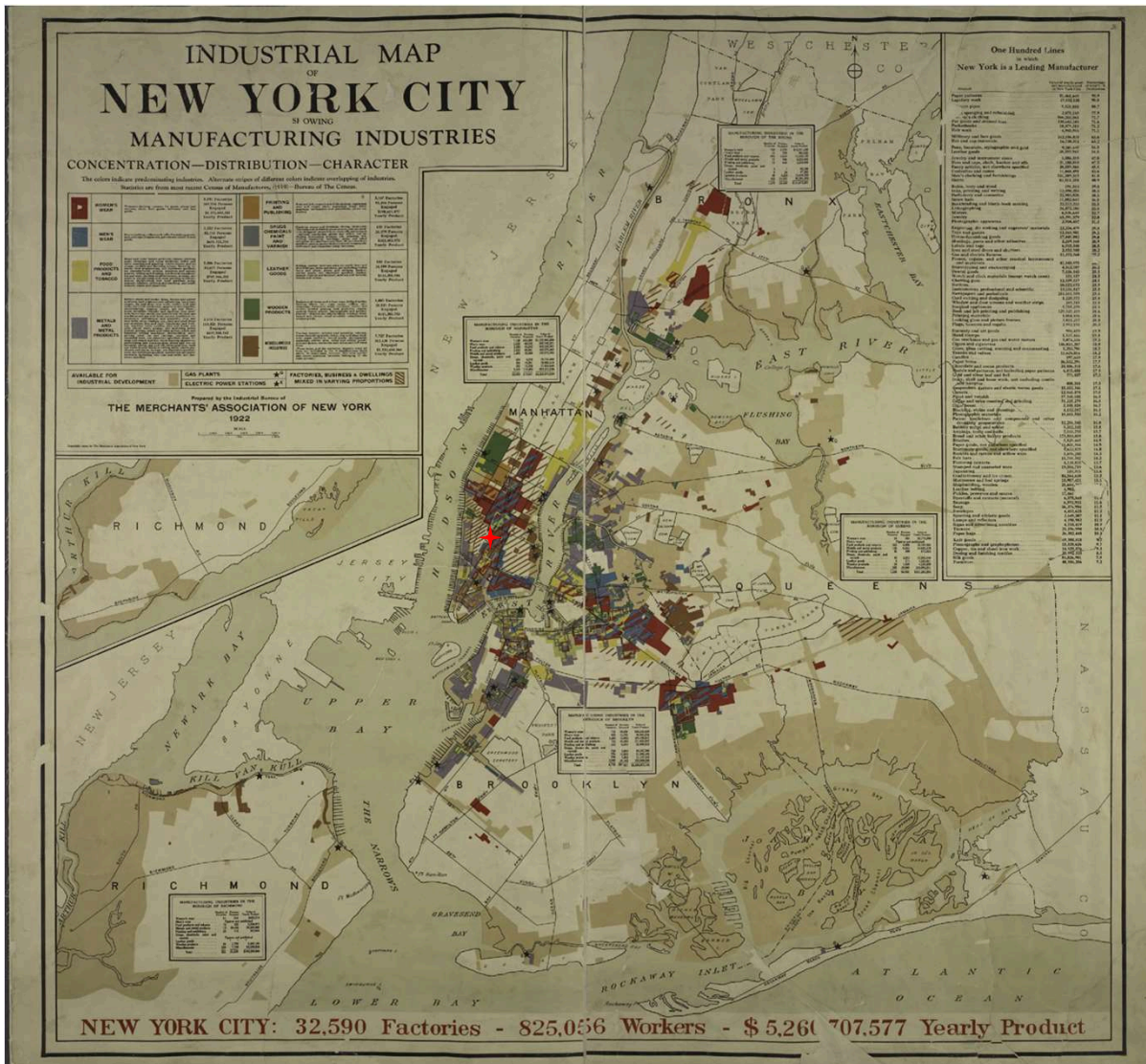
[Return to Harbor Skyline](#)

FOOTAGE OF THE GREAT WHITE WAY 1920S

[Return to The Great White Way](#)

INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD HOPPER ABOUT HIS CREATIVE PROCESS

[Return to East Side Interior](#)



1920'S NYC INDUSTRIAL MAP



Hopper's studio location

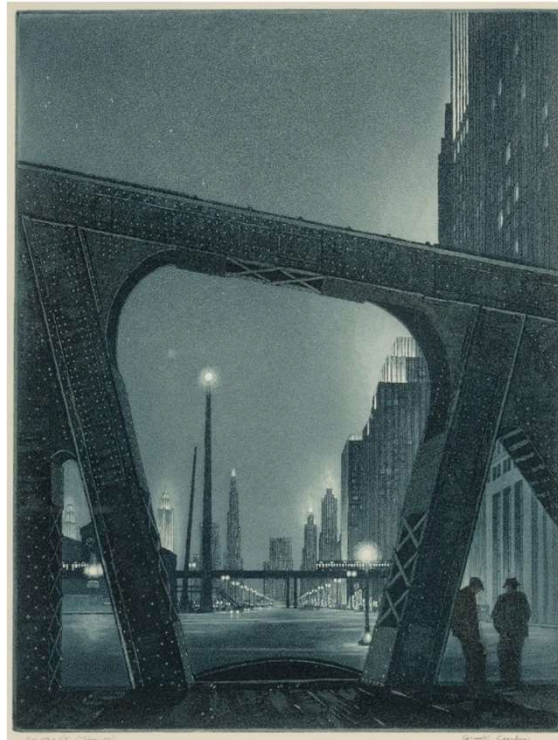
- Double click on the map to zoom in.
- Click and drag to move around the map.

[Return to East Side Interior](#)

The elements are all there but if you look closely at *Jewelled City*, there is no single spot where one could stand to have this view. Based on various photographs it appears that Geerlings took many sketches from along the LaSalle Street bridge and combined them in a way that made viewers feel as if they recognized this place, but in fact it is a composite of reality.

The bridge appears to be on the south side of the river, but in fact it is on the north side. From this position you can't see many of the buildings he has included in the print but the view to the El is perfect.

Additionally one would need to be on the far south side of the bridge to see the clock tower; on the center of the bridge to see the office building with distinct vertical architecture in the foreground; and on the far south side of the bridge to see some of the skyscrapers on the north side of the river.



[Return to Jewelled City](#)

NYC FRUIT VENDORS - THE ORIGINAL FOOD "TRUCKS"

October 22, 1903: Cart vendors caused congestion on streets already brimming with pedestrians and automobiles, forcing police to shepherd them from high traffic locations.

[Return to Cherries 5¢](#)

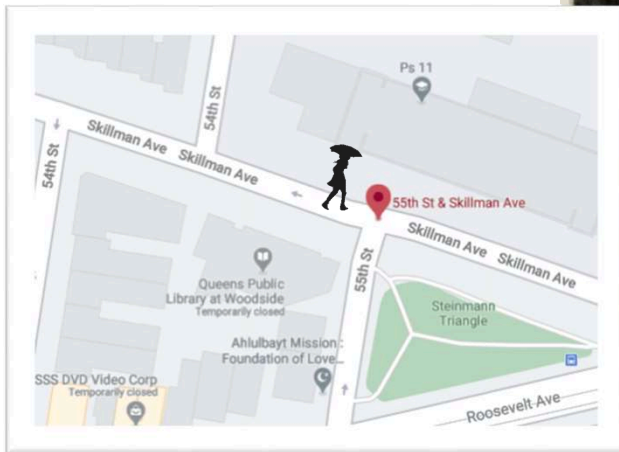


The same building can be seen on the street today in 2020.

Unlike many artists of the early 1900s, Martin Lewis seemed to thrive on finding interesting cityscapes to which he added indistinguishable figures to illustrate the everyday American. *Rainy Day in Queens* was no different. He found the setting for this etching likely while taking the train. The open space being prepped for the new public school meant there would be space for him to sit and sketch his studies for the print.

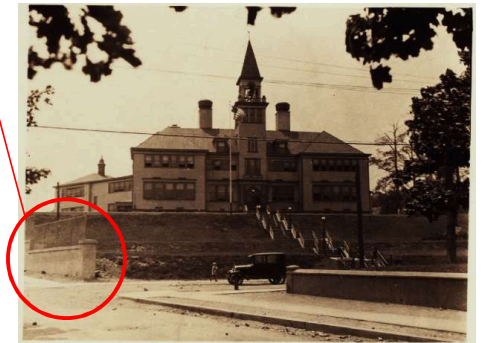


These historic photos from NY Public Library's Digital Gallery confirm the architectural details that may have attracted the artist to this location.



The map of where the artist once stood.

[Return to Rainy Day in Queens](#)



THE BUILDERS OF THE 1930'S

[Return to The Builders](#)

APPALLING LIST OF AUTO FATALITIES

W. K. S. Hershey Urges Motorists To Exercise Extreme Care At All Times

SPEAKS AT RED LION

The Gazette and Daily York,
Pennsylvania Jun 1935

Red Lion, June 5.—Approximately 99,000 people were killed by accidents in the United States last year, 5,000 more than inhabit the state of Nevada, said W. K. S. Hershey, secretary of the White Rose Motor club of York county, in an address before the Civic Advancement League held in the Lincoln Fraternity hall, this place.

Basing his statements on reports from the National Safety Council and Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, Mr. Hershey continued, "2,075 people were killed, 3,627 injured permanently, and 29,770 temporarily, in Pennsylvania and 58 killed, 98 injured permanently and 802 temporarily in York county by automobiles during the same year." In his address, he informed his listeners that 64 per cent of these accidents were due to negligence on the part of the operators; 15 per cent to defective mechanism of the cars; and 21 per cent to carelessness on the part of pedestrians. Excessive speed, driving off the highway, driving on the wrong side of the highway, failing to yield the right of way, and driving under the influence of liquor were the principal causes of those accidents in which the operators were at fault.

Warns of "Loose Nut" Behind Wheel

He declared that it is not the loose nut on the car that causes most of the automobile accidents, but it is the loose nut behind the wheel. He said: "We were stricken with horror and shuddered when the Morro Castle sank off the New Jersey coast last September and more than 100 lives were lost. Newspapers carried bold headlines about it. We thought something just had to be done about it. Yet in York county last year, there were 106 accidental deaths and we thought very little about it. People shudder at the appalling toll of life from flood, famine and epidemic, yet the general public is indifferent to this modern horror of civilization which is taking more lives and causing more misery each year than all the epidemics."

In concluding his address, he stated that we can teach safety continually, enact all the safety legislation that can be enacted in our legislative halls and it will help very little in reducing the number of automobile accidents unless the operators and pedestrians using the highway exercise extreme care at all times.

[Return to Highway Holiday](#)

NEW YORK CITY IN THE 1930'S

[Return to Downtown, NY](#)