



Industry, Work, Society, and Travails in the Depression Era:  
American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection





SEE PAGE 30

*John Constable*



# Industry, Work, Society, and Travails in the Depression Era: American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection

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September 9 through November 10, 2019

ABOVE

Arthur Rothstein (1915-1985)

***Dust Storm, Cimarron County, Oklahoma***, 1936

Gelatin silver print (printed early 1940s),

8 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 12 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches

See details page 76.

ON THE COVER

Robert Gilbert (1907-1988)

***Industrial Composition***, 1932

Oil on canvas, 47 x 34 inches

See details page 45.



Hillstrom Museum of Art

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# INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The Hillstrom Museum of Art is pleased to present this extensive exhibition of works from the collection of Daniel Shogren and Susan Meyer. *Industry, Work, Society, and Travails in the Depression Era* features nearly 100 paintings and photographs by around 60 different artists. Most of the works date from the turbulent 1930s, an era of particular interest to the collectors and one that is also heavily reflected in the Hillstrom Museum of Art's own collection. Many or all of the artists in this exhibition would be logical choices for the Museum, given the type of collecting done by Museum namesake Richard L. Hillstrom—who tended to acquire art from the first half of the 20th century by Americans working in the figurative and realist tradition, and who knew Shogren as a fellow art enthusiast. Indeed, 12 of the works in the exhibit are by artists also held by the Museum, and one of the paintings, titled *Koppers Coke Plant* (c.1940), was earlier owned by Hillstrom, who acquired it directly from his friend, the artist Elof Wedin (1901-1983).

The exhibition is timely in two particular ways. First, it coincides with the 90th anniversary of “Black Tuesday,” the October 29, 1929 crash of the U.S. stock market that contributed to the Great Depression of the 1930s. And there are a number of works in the exhibit that relate to the Dust Bowl of that decade, finding context with today's concerns about climate change and thereby connecting with Gustavus Adolphus College's Nobel Conference 55, “Climate Changed: Facing our Future,” held September 24-25, 2019.

The Museum is grateful to Daniel Shogren and Susan Meyer for generously sharing so many of the fine works from their impressive collection, and for their passion and enthusiasm for this exhibition. We are also grateful for all their additional support of the exhibit, including toward this illustrated catalogue, and for the texts they wrote for it.

We also wish to thank Christian A. Peterson, independent scholar and former long-time photography curator at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, for his research and texts relating to the many photographs in the exhibition. And we wish to acknowledge Gustavus Adolphus College students Joy Dunna, Maggie Harrison, Paisley Lovrich, Danann Mitchell, and Vance Noel for the research they undertook on artists Abraham Harriton (1893-1986), Daniel Celentano (1902-1980), Edgar Corbridge (1901-1988), William Schwartz (1896-1977), and Zoltan Sepeshy (1898-1974), as a class project for the College's Museum Studies course in spring 2019.

*Industry, Work, Society, and Travails in the Depression Era: American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection* will travel to the Tweed Museum of Art at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, for a showing in January, 2021.

Collectors Daniel Shogren and Susan Meyer wish to acknowledge the following people, galleries, and catalogues that have aided in their collecting: Jean Bublely and the Esther Bublely Estate Collection; Michael D. Hall and Pat Glascock and the catalogue *Great Lakes Muse: American Scene Painting in the Upper Midwest, 1910-1960* (written by Hall and Glascock, published 2003 by The Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, Michigan); Wendy Halsted Beard and Halsted Gallery; John Horseman and the catalogue *Modern Dialect: American Paintings from the John and Susan Horseman Collection* (written by Julie Novarese Pierotti, published 2012 by Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, Tennessee); Alan Klotz and Alan Klotz Gallery; Wes and Leon Kramer; Mack Lee and Lee Gallery; Keith de Lellis and Keith de Lellis Gallery; Richard Norton and Richard Norton Gallery; Thom Pegg and Tyler Fine Art; Jason Schoen and the catalogue *Coming Home: American Paintings 1930-1950 from the Schoen Collection* (published 2003 by the Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, Georgia); Keith Sherman and Helicline Fine Art; and Martin Weinstein, Leslie Hammons, and Weinstein Hammons Gallery.

Donald Myers  
Director  
Hillstrom Museum of Art

# American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection

## COLLECTOR'S STATEMENT

For some reason, my wife Susan Meyer and I have always been fascinated by the 1930s. Maybe it's because we were both history majors in college. I have a love for art, and the art of the 1930s, in particular that of the American Scene and Regionalism, especially appeals to me. The art of that era was the art of America. Famed historian of American art Thomas Craven said "art begins at home." The subject of this period's art was what was going on with the people of America. There were great changes taking place, and many of the photographs and paintings in our collection reflect those changes. The country was continuing its evolution from an agrarian society to a city-dwelling, industrial society. Technology was having an enormous effect on all people. The government was struggling to pull the country out of a deep depression. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Farm Security Administration (FSA) were recording the social dislocation through photography. American government support for the arts through the Federal Art Project (FAP) in the 1930s had a dual purpose: it employed many artists, and it recorded the times. A number of pieces in our collection record the integrity of work and the hardships people experienced. The social realism of the time portrayed less positive subjects through paintings and photographs. The art of the 1930s was generally quite political and very often made a social statement.

In my working career, I have traveled the Midwest and worked in factories where I've witnessed today's working men and women. I can't help but compare today, where we have full employment and a booming stock market, to the America of the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1920s, this country was in a "boom time," but signs were beginning to appear of the coming disaster known as the Great Depression along with the Dust Bowl. By the 1930s, jobs were hard to come by, especially in the manufacturing sector. In 1933, the steel industry was running at 10 percent capacity and roughly 25 percent of the population was unemployed. Are we seeing warning signals, such as climate change and income disparity, that portend a future Depression and new Dust Bowl? If so, are we prepared, and have we learned anything from our history? As they say, "history repeats itself." Will we listen to history and avoid another time like the 1930s?

Daniel Shogren

Author initials for the following artist  
biographies and object texts:

SM – Susan Meyer

DM – Donald Myers

CAP – Christian A. Peterson

DS – Daniel Shogren

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Berenice Abbott (1898-1991)

***Murray Hill Hotel, Spiral, 112 Park Avenue, New York, 1935***

Gelatin silver print, 9 3/8 x 7 1/2 inches

Berenice Abbott was a major 20th-century American photographer, best known for her extensive documentary work in New York during the Great Depression. She spent the 1920s in Paris, where she was an assistant to Dada/Surrealist artist and photographer Man Ray (1890-1976) and also ran her own portrait studio. She befriended Eugène Atget (1857-1927), the leading documentarian of Paris and its environs around the turn of the 20th century, and helped salvage and promote his work after his death. Upon returning to the United States in 1930, she turned her large-format camera on New York City for the federal government's Works Progress Administration (WPA), photographing the city's buildings, bridges, and streets during a period of rapid expansion; many of these images appeared in her 1939 book *Changing New York*.

Abbott created editorial photographs for *Fortune* and other business and popular magazines beginning in the 1940s. In 1935, she established the photography program at the New School for Social Research in New York, where she taught for over two decades. Several high school textbooks published in the 1950s and 1960s contain examples of her scientific photography, illustrating such phenomenon as motion and magnetism. Abbott moved in 1966 to rural Maine, where she lived until her death at 93.

The title of this photograph suggests that the tall, Art Deco skyscraper it depicts is the Murray Hotel, but only the image's foreground elements were part of the hotel. Built in 1884 on Park Avenue at 40th Street and demolished about 10 years after Abbott made this image, it featured the curved bay windows and metal fire escapes seen on the right. For another exposure, Abbott turned her camera on the hotel's façade, totally eliminating surrounding buildings, such as are seen here.

Interested in the rapid transformation of New York's streets and architecture, Abbott presented in this picture the contrast between old, elaborate architectural elements and the sleek lines of the new skyscrapers. She shows both buildings having a strong vertical reach, but the Murray Hotel remained dark and tethered to the ground, while the lighter Deco structure boldly reaches to touch the heavens. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Berenice Abbott (1898-1991)

***Wall Street and Stock Exchange*, 1933**

Gelatin silver print (printed later), 10 x 8 inches

This subject is notoriously difficult to photograph, because the street is so narrow and the natural light very limited. As a result, many photographers who visit the site set up their cameras in the very spot also chosen by Abbott, across the street on the pedestal of a bronze statue from 1892 by John Quincy Adams Ward (1830-1910) of George Washington—whose leg is visible to the right. In fact, Abbott photographed the façade numerous times, always on the hunt for more dramatic illumination and mix of pedestrians and automobiles. In this one, there is moderate activity on the sidewalk and street, below the unruffled American flag. Of course, 1933 was in the midst of the country's Great Depression, when there also was limited action occurring on the trading floor inside.

The building, designed by George B. Post (1837-1913), opened in 1903 and features six Corinthian columns and a pediment of classical figures. It is actually located on Broad Street, just off the corner of Wall Street. The New York Stock Exchange has been for years the world's largest exchange, measured by market capitalization. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Dewey Albinson (1898–1971)

***Mining Architecture, Mine Shaft, Norway, Michigan, c.1934***

Oil on canvas, 24 x 28 inches

Dewey Albinson, born in Minneapolis, studied at the Minneapolis School of Art from 1915 to 1919. He won a scholarship that allowed him to study in New York City at the Art Students League, and at the League's summertime program in Woodstock, New York, for landscape painting, the genre for which he is best known. In New York from 1919 to 1921, Albinson then briefly returned to Minnesota, but left for France in late 1922. During his two years there, he studied with, among others, Cubist artist André Lhote (1885–1962).

Albinson was back in Minnesota in 1924. He served as Director of the St. Paul School of Art from 1926 to 1929, also teaching painting there. He was later involved in the Works Progress Administration (WPA), serving as State Director of its Educational Division from 1935 to 1937. He also painted murals for the WPA, at post offices in Cloquet, Minnesota and Marquette, Michigan. Albinson made extended two-year trips outside the country, to Italy in 1929, and to Canada in 1939. He later lived in Lambertville, New Jersey, close to his artist friend B.J.O. Nordfeldt (1878–1955; also represented in this exhibition), and spent the last years of his life, starting in 1952, living and working in Mexico. Albinson exhibited widely, including in Chicago and New York, and his works were hailed by critics for their vigor and directness.

Norway, Michigan is located on the state's Upper Peninsula, in the Menominee Iron Range. Like Albinson's native Minnesota, Michigan has three highly significant iron ranges and the six ranges, which are adjacent to Lake Superior, were responsible for a great deal of the U.S. production of iron ore. Mining was hard and dangerous work, and many accounts can be found of deaths related to working in the mines, from cave-ins or equipment mishaps. During the Great Depression, the mining industry was very hard hit and northern Michigan was severely affected—so NOT mining was also a hardship.

Albinson created numerous images from his time in Michigan in the summer of 1934, including several of Norway and its mining industry. *Mining Architecture, Mine Shaft, Norway, Michigan* shows the structures around the opening of a mine shaft, painted in a faceted, Cubist manner that the artist often used. Brilliant colors contrast against darker ones, and as was frequent, Albinson used his palette knife to apply and manipulate some of the pigment. The scene is a calm one, perhaps reflecting the halt in ore production that the Depression brought. A large painting of related subject that Albinson did under the New Deal Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) was *Northern Minnesota Mine* (1934; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.). It is an image of open-pit iron ore mining, in contrast with the underground Michigan operation Albinson depicted in this painting. – DM



## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Dewey Albinson (1898–1971)

***Oberg's Fish Houses***, c.1925

Oil on canvas, 24 x 34 inches

In 1918, Albinson made his first trip to the “North Shore” of Lake Superior, to which he returned many times, especially spending significant time in the area around Grand Portage, Minnesota, in the far northeastern part of the state, close to the Canadian border. His subjects included several characteristic aspects of the region. He painted portraits of the Native Ojibwe living in the area, and he painted “The Witch Tree,” a gnarled cedar clinging to rocks on the Superior shore that the Ojibwe believed to be where an evil spirit lived. He also painted numerous images related to the Lake’s fishing industry, practiced by Natives and European transplants alike.

The Oberg family were fishers in the area. Olaf Axel Oberg owned and lived in what is now the Voyageur Marina in Grand Portage and set nets for fishing in an area near the Rock of Ages lighthouse, 20 or so miles east across Lake Superior close to Isle Royale. Fishing was an important industry, one that was frequently practiced year-round, even during the harsh, freezing winter months—which often were the best times for catching the lake herring and trout that were the two important kinds of fish harvested from the Lake. From his first trip to the Grand Portage area in 1922—made via the freighter and mail boat the America in the period when autos were uncommon and passable roads even rarer—Albinson became acquainted with area residents, and likely knew the Oberg family well.

*Oberg's Fish Houses* shows a protected cove with docks, boats, and fish houses of the sort then common on Lake Superior. The white boat in the left foreground appears to be a skiff, the boats with pointed bow and stern that were typically not very long and were used for netting herring (versus larger sailboats used for manning hook lines used to catch the larger trout). The fish house at the right has an opening in the side and there appears to be a ramp in the water that allows the boat to be hauled next to the door for easy unloading of the catch of the day. Once unloaded into the fish house, the fish were cleaned and prepared for shipping with a rapidity that amazed Albinson. In the background can be seen the low “sawtooth” mountains of the area, which the artist described in his writings.

The painting has the Cubist, faceted quality frequently found in Albinson’s work. It shows his typical manner of working, which was described in a film made by his brother in the early 1940s. This involved an initial application of a cool undertone, over which the artist then applied warmer colors with his brush and palette knife. Albinson also created a wood engraving print with imagery identical to this painting around the same time. Titled *Lake Superior Fish Houses*, an example of the print can be found in the Minnesota Historical Society. – DM

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Arnold Blanch (1896–1968)

***Outside the City***, c.1942

Oil on canvas, 22 x 36  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches

Arnold Blanch was born in Mantorville, Minnesota. He told in a 1964 interview that his mother and aunt copied paintings, which encouraged him to transfer his fantasies into visual imagery. He also noted his own youthful copying of works by illustrators such as Charles Dana Gibson (1867–1944). Blanch, who didn't graduate from high school, decided to attend art school after seeing students drawing from sculpture casts in the Minneapolis library. His *New York Times* obituary noted that he studied at the Minneapolis School of Art from 1915 to 1917, then at the Art Students League in New York City, to which he had earned a scholarship, from 1919 to 1921. Blanch taught for the League's summer landscape program in Woodstock, New York, in 1920, and he settled there permanently in 1923. His earliest solo exhibitions, in 1926 and 1929 at New York's Dudensing Gallery, were the first of many during his career. In the Depression Era, Blanch painted public murals in post offices in Columbus, Wisconsin; Norwalk, Connecticut; and Fredonia, New York. Also during the 1930s, he had numerous teaching positions around the country, including in San Francisco, Colorado Springs, and at the Art Students League, and in 1933 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Blanch's early works were described "romanticized landscapes" in a *New York Times* review of a 1962 retrospective at the Krasner Gallery. Starting in the 1940s, he frequently experimented with abstraction, and also with touches of Surrealism. *Outside the City* dates from about 1942. Formerly in the Jason Schoen Collection, it was exhibited in *Coming Home: American Paintings, 1930–1950, from the Schoen Collection* (2003; organized by the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens).

In the exhibition catalogue, art historian Andrew Ladis analyzed the painting's rather depressing imagery: "Veiled in the blue-negating smoke of the industry that sustains it, the distant city on the plain apparently offers no inspiration or solace to the forlorn soul seated in the shadow of a pair of ossified trees, whose ashen branches are the natural equivalent of the city's stony towers. If the trees are a metaphor of dead hope and the city is another kind of skeleton, then the ruined factory in the center is an unwelcome prophecy. Rather than the fruits of abundance, industrialization and urbanization leave a charred and greenless landscape dotted with factories the colors of fire and cinders: an abandoned Boschian Hell. There is a paradoxical pointlessness to the train's determined course from one furnace-factory to another, and the one road we see hardly explains how the solitary woman in the foreground got there. Her isolation and loneliness suggest the dehumanizing consequences of a world where, perversely, civilization's only apparent purpose is to wreak ruin. Painted in the bleak year of 1942, *Outside the City* should be understood in the context of contemporary sorrows and as an expression of Blanch's pessimism in the face of world war." – DM

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Cameron Booth (1892-1980)

***Viaduct (Washington Avenue Bridge)*, 1930**

Oil on canvas, 33 x 47 inches

Cameron Booth was born in Erie, Pennsylvania. As an adult, he was nationally recognized, but he was known as the “Dean of Minnesota Painting” and worked in the state much of his career. He studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1912 to 1917, then after a period in the army in World War I traveled around France, where he saw influential works by the Cubists and other Modernists, and by old Masters. After returning to the U.S. in 1919, Booth settled in Minneapolis in 1921 to teach art at the Minneapolis School of Art. He went abroad again in 1927 and studied briefly in Paris with Cubist artist André Lhote (1885-1962). In 1929, he began teaching at the St. Paul School of Art, becoming its director in 1938 and remaining there until 1942. During the 1930s, Booth was involved in New Deal public art projects including serving as the head of Minnesota’s technical committee for the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) and helping to guide a University of Minnesota program patterned after the PWAP in which several artists created urban landscapes of and around the University. Booth also taught at the Art Students League in New York, from 1944 to 1948, after which he joined the faculty at the University of Minnesota until retirement in 1960.

*Viaduct (Washington Avenue Bridge)* is one of Booth’s many urban landscapes, which include several depicting bridges and underpasses. In such works, the artist combined the realist approach that characterized his work in this period with an abstracted, Cubist handling of the geometrical masses of buildings and bridges. This painting was the first major Regionalist painting to enter the Shogren-Meyer Collection, in 1998. It depicts a bleak winter day in Minneapolis, painted with mostly neutral tans and grays that are punctuated with bright touches of color like the red stop signs on the bridge supports. A train chugs across the bridge, underneath which walks seven warmly-dressed people, two with dogs that sniff each other. Three cars pass under the railroad tracks and head off in the distance, while a truck comes up Washington Avenue toward the viewer. “Murphy” is painted above its cab, likely indicating the Minneapolis-based Murphy Warehouse Company, established in 1904 and still in operation today. Booth has also painted an identification number, 354, on the side of the locomotive engine.

There is a similar train, but with “347” on its side, in a closely-related Booth painting titled *Washington Avenue Bridge* (also 1930) that was included in a 1977 Booth exhibition at the Plains Art Museum in Fargo, North Dakota. That work, the location of which is unknown, features a virtually identical composition but with only two cars, no people or dogs, and different writing on the truck. Although it’s the same large size as the Shogren-Meyer painting, it may have been a preliminary version of the image and appears to be generally less detailed. - DM

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Aaron Bohrod (1907-1992)

***Arkansas Farm***, c.1935

Oil on board, 15 x 21 inches

Aaron Bohrod was born in Chicago. He told how as a young child of three or four years, he happily filled pads of yellow paper with “pencil scratchings,” which his mother said kept him occupied and out of mischief. Bohrod enrolled in youth art classes at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago when he was 12, and in high school he served as staff artist for the school’s magazine. As a young man, he attended adult art classes at the Institute’s School, followed by around two years of study in New York at the Art Students League. There Bohrod studied with, among others, prominent artists Kenneth Hayes Miller (1876-1952) and John Sloan (1871-1951), the latter a particular influence.

The artist’s career slowly took off. In 1933, back in Chicago, he was awarded the first of a number of prizes from the Art Institute, and in 1934 he began being represented by New York’s Rehn Gallery. In the late 1930s, he painted New Deal murals for post offices in Vandalia, Galesburg, and Clinton, Illinois. He was awarded two Guggenheim fellowships, and travelled around the United States extensively to make art. Bohrod held two artist-in-residencies, at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale for a year-long appointment from 1941 to 1942, and at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, from 1948 to his retirement in 1973.

His painting *Waiting for the 3:30*, of a young woman on a train platform, was acquired by President Harry S. Truman. Bohrod’s obituary in the *New York Times* noted that Truman admired the painting in a Senator’s office, asking to borrow it for the White House. The artist’s *Chicago Tribune* obituary provides additional details, indicating that Truman bought the painting for \$850 in the late 1940s from the Encyclopedia Britannica Collection when it was being dispersed. That collection was formed by William Benton, president and publisher of Britannica, who later acquired the whole collection personally and sold and donated numerous works from it. Benton was Connecticut’s U.S. Senator from 1949 to 1953, and it must have been in his office where Truman first admired the Bohrod painting.

At some point, probably in the mid 1930s, Bohrod spent time in Arkansas. A dated lithograph (1937) titled *Arkansas Home*, likely created after his time there, features an African-American girl seated on a stump in front of a small store and house that is similar to the house in *Arkansas Farm*. The American Scene painting *Arkansas Home* features a rustic house set against a changeable sky. At the left is a stoic farmer in a wagon pulled by horses he urges forward, perhaps anticipating coming bad weather. The house’s brick porch supports were delicately delineated by Bohrod, and there is a touch of domestic charm in the child’s rocking horse on the porch. Yellow passages shining in the house’s windows—likely reflections of the setting sun—provide visual drama. - DM

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Aaron Bohrod (1907-1992)

***School Day***, c.1935

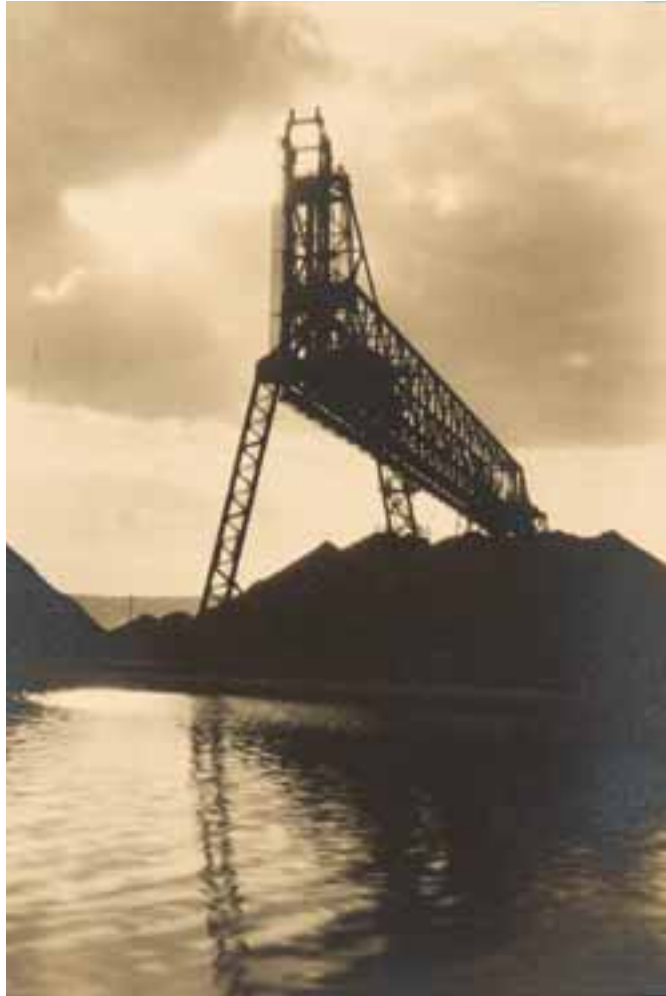
Gouache on paper, 13 ¼ x 27 ½ inches

Bohrod painted *School Day* in gouache, a medium he frequently used to great effect. The opaque whites of the paint effectively dramatize the imagery. During Bohrod's studies at New York's Art Students League, he was especially influenced by the Ashcan painter and printmaker John Sloan (1871-1951). Bohrod told how Sloan considered painting to be a form of drawing, done with paint. Many of Bohrod's works, including *School Day*, have a calligraphic, linear handling of form. This is particularly notable in the lines that form the overgrown grasses in the painting's left foreground, the leafless branches of the tree near the center, and the details of the clapboard school house, including its belfry.

An aspect of John Sloan's work that Bohrod admired greatly was his detailed exploration of the people and imagery of New York City where he lived. When Bohrod returned to Illinois after his time at the Art Students League, he wanted to "do in my own way with my own city what Sloan had done with New York." Many of the artist's works, whether urban scenes of Chicago or rural scenes from other areas he visited over the course of his career—including Illinois, Wisconsin, Arkansas, Missouri, and Pennsylvania—were elaborated considerations of the particulars of his subject.

This is the case in *School Day*, a typical Bohrod painting. Without becoming literal or too wrapped up in a particular narrative or story, the artist shows what a country school looked like on a blustery fall day, with two pupils in the foreground trudging along the road to start their classes for the day. The girl leading the way strides forward purposefully and is perhaps more eager than her companion. She wears a patterned, pink dress supplemented by a green sweater, and has her books slung over her shoulder. The boy behind, clad in a jacket and a cap, seems to struggle with the weight of his books, which he holds under his right arm while in his left hand he carries what appears to be a lunch pail. - DM

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Margaret Bourke-White (1904–1971)

***A Coal Rig Rises Like a Dinosaur on the Shores of Lake Superior, 1929***

Gelatin silver print, 5 ½ x 3 ¾ inches

One of the preeminent photojournalists of the 20th century, Margaret Bourke-White began photographing seriously in the late 1920s, as a student at Cornell University, in Ithaca, New York. After graduating she turned her attention to the architecture and industry of Cleveland and then traveled to Soviet Russia, where she photographed the country's farmers, factory workers, bridges, and other massive building projects. In 1931, at only 27, her first book, *Eyes on Russia*, was published, with both pictures and words by her. Around this time she executed modernist photomurals in New York for RKO Radio City, in Chicago for the 1934 Century of Progress Exposition, and elsewhere.

Bourke-White worked as an editor and photographer at *Fortune* magazine and in 1936 joined the staff of *Life*, providing the cover image of a dam's monumental concrete form for its first issue (a print of *Fort Peck Dam, Montana* is included in this exhibition). During World War II, she photographed Czechoslovakia before the Nazi takeover, the liberation of German death camps, and Mahatma Gandhi and his war-torn India. For three decades, Bourke-White wrote and illustrated hundreds of magazine articles, from the mid-1920s to mid-1950s. Among her dozen books were *You Have Seen Their Faces* (with Erskine Caldwell, 1937) as well as her 1963 autobiography *Portrait of Myself*. She retired from photography in 1969 and died a few years later.

Probably located in the vicinity of Duluth, Minnesota, the coal rig structure in this photograph loaded coal onto large vessels that transported it to various cities on the Great Lakes. While it may look like a dinosaur to some, collector Daniel Shogren likens it to a praying mantis, here rendered as a large mechanical version of the insect. Presented in stark silhouette, its rigid form contrasts with the cloudy sky, small mountains of coal, and water below. Like another image in this collection, Bourke-White made this photograph while on assignment for *Fortune* magazine.

Bourke-White and other photographers sometimes issued Christmas cards with mounted original photographs like this one (which is a folded card that includes a holiday greeting inside). And, while such images are uniformly smaller than exhibition prints, they usually are vintage prints. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Margaret Bourke-White (1904–1971)

***Fort Peck Dam, Montana, 1936***

Gelatin silver print (printed no later than 1962), 19 ½ x 15 ½ inches

This now widely recognized image appeared on the cover of the very first issue of *Life* magazine, published on November 23, 1936. The Time Corporation hired Bourke-White to be on its initial staff and sent her out west in 1936 to photograph primarily the workers building this massive dam on the Missouri River. To this day it remains the largest hydraulic dam in the country.

The photographer visited about half way through the six-year construction of the dam and, in actuality, photographed this scene as a horizontal image. Her full negative shows about 10 of these large gate piers, rather than the fewer shown here. It is unknown whether it was the photographic editors of *Life* or Bourke-White who decided to severely crop the image to make it fit the vertical format of the magazine. Whoever was responsible, they wisely kept the two small figures at the bottom of the image, for a sense of scale. Inside the magazine were about 10 pages of photographs by Bourke-White, along with a studio portrait of her with her large-format camera. A brief text stated, "Her photographs of Fort Peck workers make a notable contribution to candid photography, bringing elements of design and composition without loss of spontaneity and naturalness." – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Margaret Bourke-White (1904–1971)

*Louisville Flood*, 1937

Gelatin silver print (printed no later than 1971), 7 x 9  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches

Bourke-White made this searing image on assignment for *Life* magazine, and it appeared in the issue of February 15, 1937. The photograph depicts black men, women, and children lined up to receive food and clothing after a devastating winter flood of the Ohio River in late January and early February that inundated much of Louisville, Kentucky and left a million people homeless in five states.

Despite the fact that the Great Depression was still going on, the billboard against which the figures are seen, shows a nuclear, white family (their pet included), happy and well dressed. Of course the great juxtaposition of this manufactured image with the real and destitute people standing in front of it was a great comment on disparities of race, class, and wealth. While the Caucasians ride in an automobile, the African-Americans are all on foot. The picture was quickly recognized for its message, hammered home by the billboard's text, "World's Highest Standard of Living: There's no way like the American Way." – CAP



## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Margaret Bourke-White (1904-1971)

***Messabe Range, Minnesota***, 1929

Gelatin silver print, 13 x 9 7/8 inches

In 1929 *Fortune* sent Bourke-White to northern Minnesota for one of her earliest assignments for the magazine. There she photographed the Mesabi Range (as it is now generally spelled), north of Duluth, which is still this country's largest source of iron ore. Undoubtedly working under trying conditions, she captured the giant steam shovels that tore away at the earth, leaving massive pits and a scarred terrain. In the distance in this picture is a vast plume of smoke rising into the clouds, probably a result of a step in the process of securing the ore.

The range was discovered by Caucasians in 1866, and derived its name from the Ojibwe "Misaabe-Wajin," meaning "giant mountain." Bourke-White's image appeared in the May 1931 issue of *Fortune* as a full-page image, over the caption: "From the Messabe pit, in 1929, came 2,500,000 tons of high-grade iron ore." During the Great Depression, demand for iron ore naturally decreased but it went up dramatically during the World War II period, with 49,000,000 tons produced in 1940. - CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Margaret Bourke-White (1904–1971)

***Ore Boat Coming Through Locks***, c.1933

Gelatin silver print, 12 ½ x 8 ½ inches

Given the soft-focus effects in this image, it is somewhat surprising to realize that Margaret Bourke-White was its photographer. Its atmospheric quality aligns the image with pictorial photography, the first movement that promoted photography as a means of creative expression. Bourke-White, on the other hand, made her reputation as a photo journalist and documentary photographer who valued sharp detail and crisp tonalities. Not surprisingly, therefore, this picture is an early one by her, a few years before she joined the staff of *Life* magazine. The subject matter, on the other hand, is typical for her: large, man-made, industrial products. Neither the name of the ship nor the location of the locks is known. And the fact that Bourke-White did not provide this information suggests that perhaps she was, indeed, acting like a pictorialist, creating a pleasing image for artistic rather than documentary purposes. The image asymmetrically places massive concrete and metal elements on the left, offset on the right by one wall of the lock. The only natural elements present are the gently undulating water below and the partially overcast sky above. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Margaret Bourke-White (1904–1971)

***Pouring the Heat, Otis Steel Company, Cleveland, 1928***

Gelatin silver print, 13  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 9  $\frac{7}{8}$  inches

Bourke-White made this vivid, action-packed image of molten steel (“the heat”) being poured from one caldron into another. She heightened the image’s drama by using an elevated viewpoint and capturing the strong contrasts of light and dark. Sparks of metal shoot out of the lower vessel and massive machinery hovers over the upper one.

The Otis Steel Company was one of the earliest major such businesses in Ohio, being founded in 1875 and merging with another in 1942. A similar image by her (a print of which is also in the Shogren-Meyer collection) was used as the frontispiece of a book that Otis Steel published about itself in 1929. These images may have been made on assignment for *Fortune* magazine, where Bourke-White was working at the time. - CAP

# INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Margaret Bourke-White (1904–1971)

***United States Airship Akron*, 1931**

Gelatin silver print, 16 ¾ x 22 ½ inches

In 1931, Bourke-White traveled to Akron, Ohio to document the unveiling of the country's first rigid airship, before its maiden voyage. Ordered by the U.S. Navy for possible naval reconnaissance and built by the Goodyear Zeppelin Company, the Akron is seen emerging from an air dock and being observed by a relatively sparse crowd of people.

Unfortunately, the zeppelin crashed a few years later, but it lives on in the many remaining photographic prints of it, in their unusual frames. Goodyear incorporated rivets and pieces of Duralumin, the material used to construct the airship, to frame the pictures, a clever marketing device. Most of these framed photographs were either presented to Goodyear executives or awarded to tire salesmen for record sales. And every one of them features an engraved plaque describing the material used for the frame and in the airship. While the photograph is a rather straight-forward document, the frame turns it into an intriguing and curious object. Bourke-White claimed that she loved machines, so she undoubtedly enjoyed these manufactured metal frames. – CAP



## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Esther Bubley (1921-1998)

***Iron Ore Yard, Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range Railroad, Proctor, Minnesota, 1947***

Gelatin silver print, 11 x 14 inches

Esther Bubley was most active as a freelance photojournalist in the two decades after World War II. She proclaimed, "Put me down with people," identifying her preferred subject, along with that of American industry. She grew up in a small town in northern Wisconsin and became interested in photography while attending the State Teacher's College in Superior, Wisconsin, and later the Minneapolis College of Art. In 1941 she headed to New York, but soon after moved to Washington, D.C. attracted by wartime government jobs.

Soon she was hired by Roy Stryker (1893-1975), head of the Office of War Information, where she initially worked as a darkroom assistant before becoming a photographer. In 1943 she was employed by the Standard Oil Company for a major photographic project that took her to many American states, along with foreign spots in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere. Bubley's work appeared primarily in print, such as *Life* magazine and *Ladies Home Journal*, up until about 1960. In 1954 she presented a solo show of her photographs at New York's Limelight Gallery, an early venue for the medium. That same decade, she went on assignments for UNICEF and the Pittsburgh Children's Hospital. Living in New York in the 1960s and 70s, she turned her attention towards plants and animals, about which she wrote numerous books.

This elevated image by Bubley suggests the massive amount of iron ore that was harvested from the northern Minnesota iron ranges, America's largest source for the material. Bubley captured over 100 specialized hopper cars (known as jennies), on multiple tracks, stretching off into the distance at a railyard about five miles southwest of Duluth. The air is filled with steam, provided by the powerful engines that hauled the cars to port, for emptying into large ships that took the ore to mills for processing into steel. Each jenny held about 50 tons of iron ore and the trains could stretch to 100 cars. Another print of this image is in the permanent collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Art. - CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Esther Buble (1921-1998)

***Liftman, Ore Docks, Duluth, Minnesota, 1947***

Gelatin silver print, 8 7/8 x 8 inches

From information on this print, we know that this worker was operating at a dock owned by the Missabe and Iron Range Railroad, at Duluth's Lake Superior port. Decked out in bib overalls, heavy boots, and thick gloves, he is operating a chute through which iron ore was poured from dockside bins into a ship's hold.

From his stance, it appears that it took two steady hands to open and close these chutes, which were certainly large and noisy. It also probably demanded the coordination of multiple workers, one of which would have been situated on the ship below, where this figure is looking. The scale of the iron ore business and its attendant equipment is made obvious by the height at which the man works and the length of the structure, which extends in the distance as far as the eye can see. - CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Clarence Holbrook Carter (1904–2000)

### ***Superior Coal Docks*, 1935**

Watercolor on paper, 6 x 9 inches

Clarence Holbrook Carter was born in Portsmouth, Ohio in 1904. He studied at the Cleveland School of Art from 1923 to 1927 and his teachers there included Henry Keller (1869–1949) and Paul Travis (1891–1975). In 1927, Carter went to Europe and studied briefly in Capri under Hans Hoffman (1880–1966). He then traveled to Taormina, Italy, and to Paris, France. Returning home in 1928, he married and took up residence in Cleveland, supporting himself by teaching at the Cleveland Museum of Art. From 1938 to 1944 Carter lived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and taught at the Carnegie Institute. In 1944, he resigned his teaching post and move to Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Four years later, he moved again, this time to New Jersey.

Carter is recognized as both a landscape and portrait painter, accomplished in both oil and watercolor. His crisp style has been called magic realism. Many of his best-known paintings depict specific regional subjects he observed as a boy growing up in southeastern Ohio or as an adult living in the industrial centers of the Great Lakes region. From 1937 to 1938 Carter served as the Northeastern Ohio District Supervisor of the Federal Arts Project (FAP). In 1938, he completed a series of monumental murals for the walls of the Portsmouth (Ohio) Post Office. In 1949, he served as guest instructor at the Minneapolis School of Art. For the balance of his life, he continued to teach at various institutions while keeping up his painting.

John Carter, Clarence Carter's son, has noted that while on a family vacation, his father painted this study titled *Superior Coal Docks* and it formed the basis for a painting he would do in 1949 called *Coal Docks at Superior*. The Duluth Superior harbor in the late 1930s was a very busy place. The coal piles in the foreground of *Superior Coal Docks* and the grain elevators in the background represent two important commodities the port handled. It's likely that ore boats brought the coal in to be used in the area and then took iron ore back down the Great Lakes to the steel mills around Chicago or Pittsburgh. The port at Duluth/Superior felt the effects of the Great Depression because it was tied to both agriculture and the steel industry, which suffered significant setbacks in that era. Many people associated with the port were laid off during the early 1930s. - DS

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Daniel Celentano (1902–1980)

***Harlem Waterfront***, 1938

Oil on canvas board, 12 x 14 inches

*Harlem Waterfront*, formerly in the collection of famed actor Bruce Willis, is inscribed with its title on the reverse. The Harlem River, located just blocks from where Celentano lived in Italian Harlem, is technically a tidal strait separating Manhattan from the rest of New York. Originally the passageway between the East River and the Hudson was in places narrow and unreliable, but over the years it was widened and deepened. In 1895, the “Harlem River Ship Canal” was dug from the Harlem River directly west across the northern end of Manhattan to the Hudson River, allowing reliable passage by large vessels including ships. Although the canal is a few miles northwest of Celentano’s neighborhood, it increased the importance of the entire Harlem River, and commerce must have grown significantly. This is suggested by the tugboat in the right background of *Harlem Waterfront* and by the barge docked at the left behind a group of young men stripping down for a swim.

Barges, used to transport freight, were employed widely when *Harlem Waterfront* was painted, though they would be abandoned in just a few decades. Such vessels usually did not have their own means of propulsion but were moved by tug boats like that in Celentano’s painting. Many barges included living quarters for a captain and sometimes his family. The laundry drying on a line at the back of the barge’s cabin in *Harlem Waterfront* suggests that more than one person dwelt there.

Celentano could readily see barges on the Harlem River, and they seem to have intrigued him, since he painted several works featuring them. One of these, *Harlem River Coal Barges*, was published as an illustration of historian Herbert Agar’s 1935 book *Land of the Free*. It shows coal being loaded into a waterfront barge. Another is Celentano’s large 1936 mural *Commerce*, made under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for the Queens Borough Public Library. That panoramic image, painted in oil on a canvas panel nearly nine feet long, features a barge at the right, in front of a cityscape with a skyscraper likely meant to suggest the Empire State Building. In the center foreground of the image of various aspects of commerce, transportation, and industry, is an artist drawing at a table, probably Celentano himself.

It resembles his image in several self-portraits, including one where he paints at an easel, featured in the 1992 Celentano exhibit at Janet Marqusee Fine Arts in New York. That work is similar in style and composition to self-portraits by the artist’s early teacher, Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975). Celentano may have known Benton’s wife Rita Piacenza before meeting Benton, since she was also from a New York Italian immigrant family. Celentano remained close with Benton, and assisted him several times on mural projects. And he appears to have considered painting a portrait of his older friend, based on the existence of a drawing recently on the art market that must be of Benton. – DM



## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Daniel Celentano (1902–1980)

*Home Workers*, c.1930

Oil on canvas, 16 x 18 inches

Daniel Celentano was born to Italian immigrant parents who lived in New York City's Italian Harlem, an ethnic enclave located near the far northeast corner of Central Park. This area was depicted in one of the artist's best-known paintings, his 1934 *Festival* (Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.), which shows an Italian-American celebration in front of the landmark church Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The church is located not far from Avenue A (now Pleasant Avenue), on which Celentano lived in his youth and in adulthood with his first wife, whom he married in 1924.

Celentano's artistic abilities were recognized early. His boyhood tutoring was followed by his becoming, at age 12, the first student of artist Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975), later one of the most famed artists in America. Benton's distinctive manner, with stylized and somewhat elongated figures, had an impact on Celentano's own approach. Celentano also studied, later, at the Cape Cod School of Art in Provincetown, Massachusetts, at the New York School of Fine and Applied Art in Greenwich Village, and at the National Academy of Design in New York.

The artist's first public exhibition was in 1930 at New York's Opportunity Gallery, an exhibit selected by Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) for that city-sponsored venue. Celentano's contribution, *Funeral*, was one of six works singled out by *New York Times* art critic Edward Alden Jewell as especially worthy of attention. The artist's first solo exhibition was at New York's Walker Galleries, which specialized in Regionalist art, the kind of art with which Celentano, like his first teacher and life-long friend Benton, was associated. Celentano was active as a mural painter in the Depression era.

*Home Workers* shows a large, multi-generation family—almost certainly Italian compatriots from Celentano's Italian Harlem neighborhood—engaged in piecework, in this case apparently meticulously attaching buttons to cards for resale. Such a tedious kind of work is also depicted in the photograph *Homework, Making Artificial Flowers* by Lewis W. Hine (1874–1940; also in this exhibition), which shows an Italian family that lived on the edges of Little Italy, a different Italian area, this one in lower Manhattan.

Piecework was one of the limited options poor immigrants had for earning a living. It might appear that the family members gathered around the table are playing a card game (and the painting was auctioned with the title *Card Players*), but the dulled expressions on their faces makes it clear that they're not doing something enjoyable. Six of the family members are at work, while an elderly woman convalesces or sleeps in a bed shoved into the kitchen of the cramped apartment. A young boy rocks the baby's cradle at the right and an older woman holds another young child while exhorting the girl in the yellow dress to join in and help earn the few pennies that hours of such work could bring. It appears that it is late in the day, yet the father of the family is not home and perhaps works long hours in a nearby sweatshop. – DM

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Marvin Cone (1891-1965)

***Cloud Patterns***, c.1940s

Oil on canvas, 18 x 20 inches

Marvin Cone was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and was associated with his hometown and its Coe College for the vast majority of his life. He graduated from Coe in 1914 and began his teaching career of over 40 years there in 1919, initially teaching French as well as art. Before starting teaching, he had attended the School of the Art Institute in Chicago for three years. During World War I, he served in the Army in France as an interpreter, remaining there after the war ended and again studying art, at the École des Beaux-Arts in Montpellier.

Cone's approach is related to that of his close friend, famed Regionalist master Grant Wood (1891-1942), especially in terms of the Iowa subject matter they both frequently explored. The two men, who met in school as teens, traveled together in 1920 to France to study art. On the ship back to the U.S., Wood introduced his friend to Winnifred Swift, who would become Cone's wife not long after. And Cone co-founded with Wood the famed but short-lived Stone City Art Colony in 1932, at which Cone taught life drawing and landscape painting.

But Cone was his own artist, with a significant output over his career, and he tended to stylize his imagery less than Wood, and to present a more personal vision of nature. Cone is recorded stating that the "artist paints, not to imitate nature, but to express individual ideas he feels himself," also noting that art "rearranges nature."

*Cloud Patterns* is one of many landscapes in which the sky and clouds dominate, leading some to term the works "cloudscapes." Cone's fascination with and reverence for clouds can be found among his earliest works, and was noted in reviews in the 1920s. These include a 1923 commentator who stated that the artist's paintings "received their inspiration from the skies," and one in 1928 who wrote, "Due to [Cone's] imaginative quality, his poetry, he has found free expression in these cloud portrayals."

Cone's ongoing interest in the cloud subject is captured in his 1933 painting *Achmed*, an image of his cat seated on the floor of his studio. The background of this work is dominated by an image of a cloud painting, leaning against the wall behind Achmed, that appears to be at least five feet tall and wide—larger than most of the artist's paintings, including ones featuring clouds, which are typically scaled similarly to the present painting.

The artist tended to prefer a limited palette of colors as in this work of mostly blues, greens, browns, and grays. The highly abstract whitish marks of paint in the upper left of *Cloud Patterns* may initially suggest the painting is unfinished, but such strokes can be found in other of Cone's paintings of atmospheric phenomena. – DM

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Edgar Corbridge (1901–1988)

***Coal Yard***, c.1950

Watercolor on paper, 15 ½ x 24 ½ inches

Edgar Corbridge was born in Lancashire, England, and came to the United States as a boy in about 1913. He settled in Fall River in the southeast part of Massachusetts, not far from Providence, Rhode Island, where he later lived. He had an apprenticeship at the Armour Sign Shop in Fall River and later had his own company, Corbridge Display Service, doing window dressing for area businesses and often incorporating his own artwork into them.

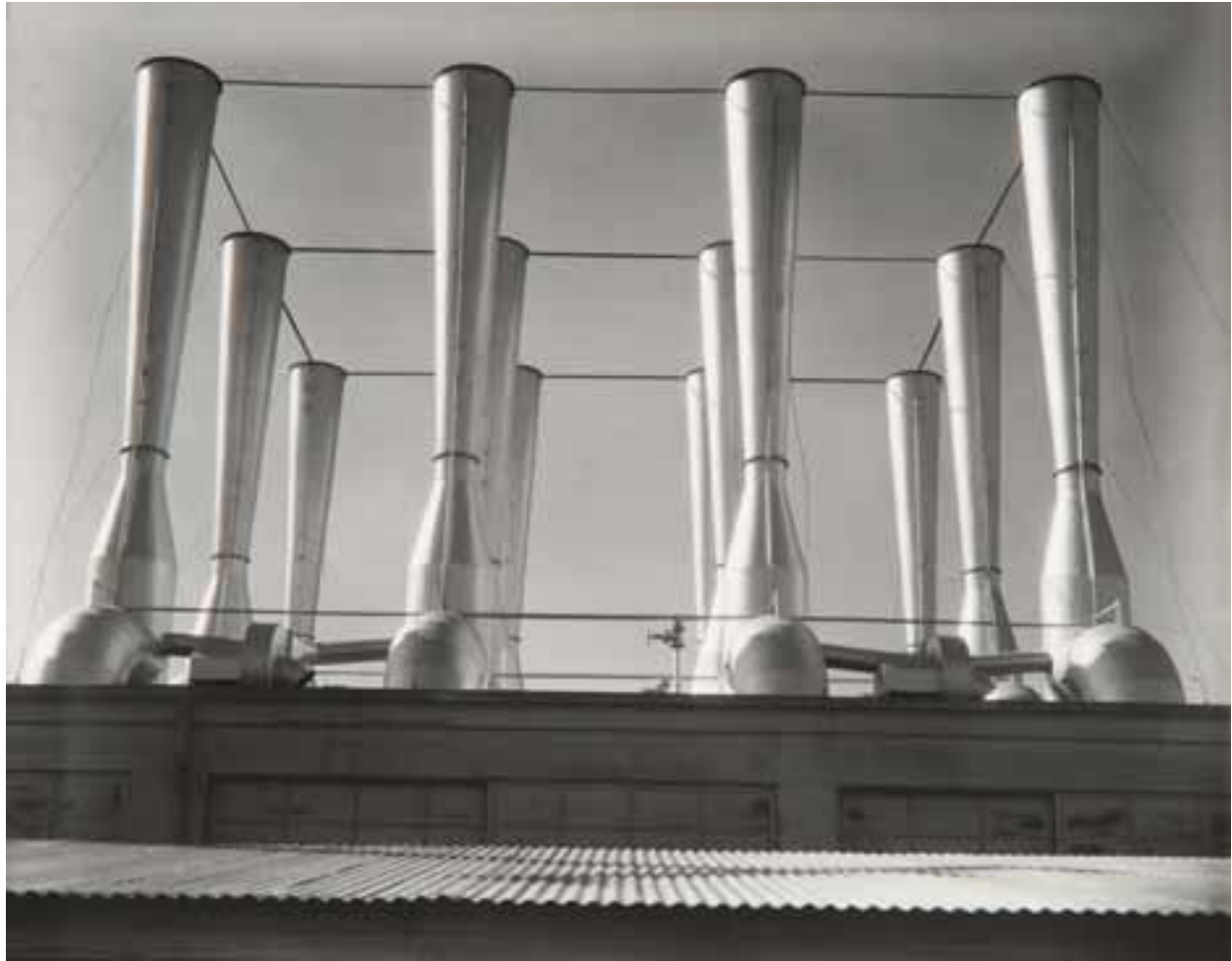
Corbridge was self-taught and was spurred to become a painter by watching another painter and deciding that he, too, would like to be an artist. He worked primarily in water-based paint and became known for the simplicity of his forms and the subtlety of his colors, as in *Coal Yard*. His work is associated with Precisionism, a form of American art that arose in the 1920s and 1930s and that is characterized by crisp outlines and abstracted, geometrical industrial or architectural forms in a static composition. His work was compared to that of the premier Precisionist, Charles Sheeler (1883–1965). In a critique of a 1946 exhibit at the Margaret Brown Gallery in Boston, this connection was noted, but Corbridge was credited with having more feeling than Sheeler, and a “more poetic use of delicate color tints.”

The artist, like many in his day, would spend summers away from his home (in Providence), including starting in the 1940s in the artist colony of Provincetown, Massachusetts. He became active in exhibiting his work with the Provincetown Art Association, including his last known exhibit, in 1964. Corbridge’s usual process was to create studies of views he saw while summering, then use those sketches back home in the winter to make his developed watercolors such as *Coal Yard*. His son Peter Corbridge recalled that in the winter their house smelled like casein, the aqueous, milk-based form of watercolor his father used.

The image in *Coal Yard* may be based on some specific locale in or around Provincetown. It has a timeless quality that seems to transcend any specificity of location, although in another work by the artist of a similar subject, *Dexter Coal Co. #2* (a business that was located in Providence) such information is part of the title. The artist painted numerous images of coal yards, according to his son Peter.

For Corbridge and his audience, the idea of coal likely was not coupled with any negative connotations. Today, however, coal and the coal industry are very much associated with concerns over global climate change, as much of the world attempts to move from carbon-based energy to renewable, clean energy such as wind and solar. – DM

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976)

***Fageol Ventilators, Oakland, California, 1934***

Gelatin silver print (printed 1960s–1970s), 7 ¼ x 9 ¼ inches

One of the great 20th-century female photographers, Imogen Cunningham started making soft-focus, pictorial photographs, but in the 1920s turned to crisp, straightforward work. After graduating from the University of Washington, Seattle with a degree in chemistry, she was inspired to begin a career in photography after seeing images by the New York portraitist Gertrude Käsebier (1852–1934). Initially, she worked in the Seattle studio of Edward S. Curtis (1868–1952; Curtis was later renowned for his comprehensive, multi-volume documentary project *The North American Indian*), but in 1910 she set up her own portrait business. Seven years later she moved to the San Francisco Bay Area and resumed making portraits there. From then until her death, she produced situational images of friends, artists, and paying customers, made both on the street and in a succession of studios.

In 1932 Cunningham became a founding member of Group f.64, a small contingent of California photographers (including Ansel Adams, 1902–1984, and Edward Weston, 1886–1958) who agitated for creative photographs made with a full range of tones and non-sentimental subjects. Schools and museums alike recognized the importance of Cunningham's work. She taught photography, from the late 1940s, at the California School of Fine Arts, the San Francisco Art Institute, and at Humboldt State College. She presented solo shows at art museums beginning in 1931, with an exhibition at the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco. Large collections of her work were purchased by the George Eastman House, the Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian Institution. Cunningham remained active in her old age; she commenced her last major project in 1973, the year she turned 90, focusing on individuals in that age group.

Cunningham was most known for her portraits and still lifes, so this industrial subject was somewhat unusual for her. Nonetheless, she succeeded at making a strikingly modernist image, like other photographers who advocated images in sharp focus and with a full range of tonalities. The metal smoke stacks glisten with reflected light and the strict symmetry of the image makes for a tightly controlled frame. Cunningham effectively used a corrugated roof in the foreground and a dark wall of windows upon which to base her main subject. Here she celebrates the Machine Age, manufacturing, and America's industrial strength. The structure upon which she directed her camera for this image was the Fageol Motor Company, which produced buses, trucks, and tractors, having opened about 20 years earlier. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976)

***Under the Queensboro Bridge***, 1934

Gelatin silver print, 8 x 10 inches

Another unusual subject for Cunningham, this street scene shows an obviously homeless man sleeping under one of Manhattan's bridges. The man huddles for warmth and has situated himself under a sign prohibiting passage but apparently not loitering. Presumably this was by the orders of the New York Police Department (the "P.D." in the sign). Next to this sign is a playful chalk drawing of a cat.

During the Great Depression, the homeless occupied whatever available public spaces they could find. In order to rest and sleep, the most desirable such locations helped shelter them from the rain, wind, and cold, like a bridge. The Queensboro Bridge, also known as the 59th Street Bridge, opened about 25 years before Cunningham made this photograph and it spans the East River to Queens, passing over Roosevelt Island. Another print of this image is in the permanent collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. - CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



John Steuart Curry (1897–1946)

***Russian Giant***, 1929

Oil on canvas, 26 x 20 inches

John Steuart Curry was born and raised on a farm near Dunavant, Kansas. His rural experience growing up doing hard physical work would influence him the rest of his life. His mother encouraged his early passion for drawing and he left high school to work and save enough money to study art, at the Kansas City Art Institute in 1916 and at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1916 to 1918. From 1919 to 1926, he worked as an illustrator on popular western magazines for artist and illustrator Harvey Dunn (1884–1952). In 1927, an art patron lent Curry \$1,000 to study art at the Académie Julian in Paris, France. Disillusioned by the abstract styles current in Europe, he returned home and took up painting American subjects. He said one should paint what one knows best. In 1928, he painted *Baptism in Kansas*, the first major painting reflecting his Regionalist approach. Critically acclaimed, it was purchased by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, founder of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

Curry had a love affair with the contest between the land and nature and man's ability to live in it. He also loved the circus and traveled with The Ringling Brothers Circus to paint it. Curry taught at the Art Students League and the Cooper Union in New York City, and he painted murals for the Department of Justice and the Department of Interior in Washington, D.C. In 1936, he was appointed Artist-in-Residence in the College of Agriculture, University of Wisconsin, Madison, remaining there until his premature death from a heart attack.

Curry was living in Connecticut when he painted *Russian Giant*, but the year before, he had painted one of his most famous paintings, *Baptism in Kansas*. Like that Regionalist emblem, *Russian Giant* has a strongly rural feel, and was no doubt influenced by the artist's agricultural upbringing. A field of cabbages surround the enormous, towering sunflower of the "Russian Giant" type that grows up to 10 feet high and has seed heads up to 20 inches in diameter. The sunflower symbolizes spirituality, faith, healing, longevity, nourishment, and good luck. Sunflowers follow the sun, and it seems possible that Curry wanted to transfer this trait to human behavior, like following a divine light and spirit. The sunflower is the state flower of Curry's native Kansas, and he reused its imagery in his famous 1938–1940 mural *The Tragic Prelude* in the State Capitol in Topeka, which includes a stand of sunflowers as one of the state's symbols.

*Russian Giant* was painted at a time when farmers were already having challenges, and it seems an ironic harbinger of how bad things were to become in the next decade. The painting was exhibited in March the year after its creation at the Whitney Studio Galleries in New York, forerunner to the Whitney Museum of American Art. Prominent *New York Herald Tribune* art critic Carlyle Burrows once owned *Russian Giant*, at the time it was published in the 1943 monograph on Curry by Laurence E. Schmeckebier. – DS

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Adolf Dehn (1895–1968)

***Mercers' Barn***, 1937

Watercolor on paper, 15 x 21 ½ inches

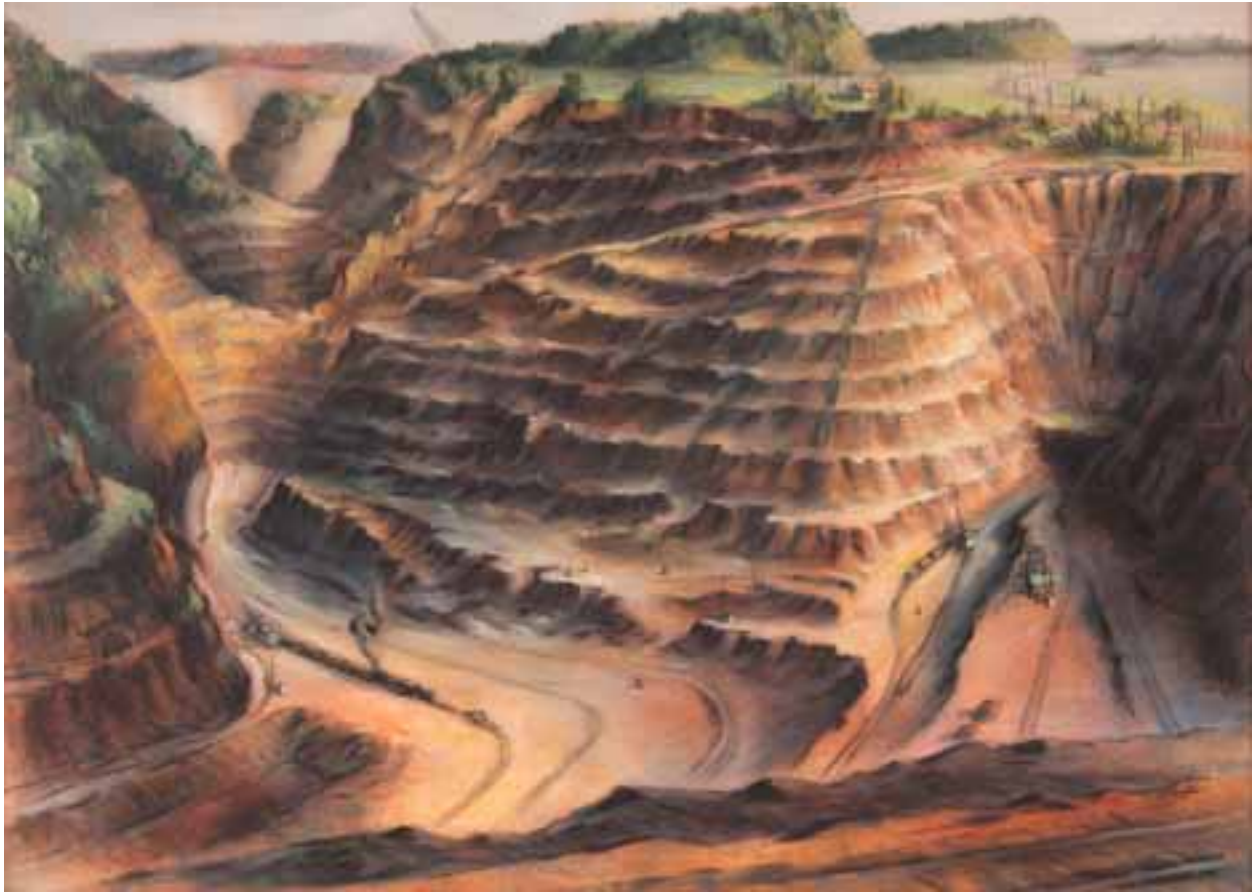
Adolf Dehn was born in Waterville, Minnesota. From 1914 to 1917, he studied at the Minneapolis School of Art. It was there that Dehn met Wanda Gág (1893–1946; also in this exhibition) and the two of them earned scholarships to study at the Art Students League, going together in 1917 to New York, where they continued a budding romance that lasted a number of years, into the mid 1920s. Dehn's study at the League was interrupted by World War I, and, as a registered conscientious objector, for four months in 1918 he lived basically as a prisoner at a military camp in South Carolina.

Initially in his career, Dehn became known for his work in lithography, and had his first exhibit of the prints at New York's Weyhe Gallery in 1921. He made hundreds of the lithos, often of a satirical nature, and in 1934 established the Adolf Dehn Print Club to promote them. The artist had not worked in color to any significant extent but starting around 1937, the year *Mercers' Barn* was painted, devoted much time to the watercolor medium and soon became acclaimed in it as well. His first exhibition of these works, at Weyhe Gallery in 1938, was highly praised in the *New York Times*, which years later in the artist's obituary referred to him as one of the country's leading watercolorists, noting his first prize in the 1943 International Water Color Exhibition in Chicago and his writing about watercolor techniques for *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Dehn's watercolors were almost exclusively landscapes. He painted many such images of his native Minnesota, especially around Waterville. The Mercers' farmstead, with its prominent red barn, must have readily caught the artist's attention as he explored the area around his hometown looking for attractive subjects. When the painting entered the Shogren-Meyer Collection, it was called simply *Farm with Red Barns*, but research has revealed that it was illustrated in the 1939 publication *American Painting Today*, which includes an essay by New York art critic, writer, and lecturer Forbes Watson, and which supplies the specific title of the work.

Dehn described his watercolor process in his 1945 book *Water Color Painting*. Noting that he never painted outdoors, he illustrated—using a watercolor in progress—how the sketch made on site was first transferred to watercolor paper, then the light colors of the sky and foreground would be laid down, followed by the greens of the ground and the colors of the roofs, then with smaller details such as the trees, the buildings, and even finer details (like the fence and cattle in *Mercers' Barn*) being added toward the end. Dehn remained active as a watercolorist, and a *New York Times* review of a 1964 retrospective exhibition praised his landscape prints in terms that readily apply to the watercolors: "He excels at landscapes that, while being models of topographical exactitude, are spirited and picturesque." – DM

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Tom Dietrich (1912–1998)

***Iron Mine, Virginia, Minnesota, 1949***

Oil on masonite, 24 x 34 inches

Tom Dietrich was a native of Wisconsin born in Appleton in 1912. He took classes at the University of Wisconsin from 1929 to 1931 and at the Cincinnati Art Academy from 1931 to 1932. His education continued at the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation in New York and at the Minneapolis School of Art in 1936. In 1941, he received a commission to paint a mural of Manhattan and New York Harbor on the ship S.S. President Van Buren. His teaching career began in 1944 at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, where he later served as Artist-in-Residence for over 30 years. Dietrich was also interested in stained glass. He traveled to Europe to study the process, and designed stained glass for many churches in the U.S.

Dietrich exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1938, 1943, and 1945. He participated in the art contest sponsored by Dayton's department store for the 1949 centennial celebration of Minnesota becoming a territory. His Wisconsin exhibitions included participating in the 1976 *A Century Plus of Wisconsin Watercolors*, at the Wustum Museum of Fine Arts in Racine, and *150 Years of Wisconsin Printmaking*, held in 1998 at the Elvehjem Museum of Art (now the Chazen Museum of Art) at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

*Iron Mine, Virginia, Minnesota* was included in the 1949 Minnesota territorial centennial exhibition at Dayton's, winning an honorable mention. By 1949, the mining industry in northern Minnesota had been running full bore for almost a decade, due mostly to World War II. The painting depicts a huge mine in Virginia, Minnesota, part of the extensive and important Mesabi Iron Ore Range. The open-pit mine was dug deep into the earth in order to extract iron ore that would be shipped east across the Great Lakes to the steel mills of Indiana and Illinois. The iron ore mines provided many jobs to immigrants and paid well for the time. – DS



## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Walker Evans (1903–1975)

***Filling Station and Company Houses for Miners, Near Morgantown, West Virginia, 1935***

Gelatin silver print (printed c.1970), 8 x 10 inches

A kingpin among straightforward photographers of the 1930s, Walker Evans is widely revered for his pictures of the American South. He enjoyed a long life in photography, making his own images, editing those of others, and teaching. After photographing the streets of New York with a small camera in the late 1920s, he acquired a large-format one and concentrated on capturing Victorian houses in New York State and New England. During the Great Depression, he made his most important body of work, documenting the vernacular architecture and poor living conditions in Alabama, Louisiana, and other Southern states. In 1938, New York's Museum of Modern Art devoted its first one-person photography exhibition to Evans' achievements and published *American Photographs*, which has been reprinted numerous times and is now considered one of the most influential photography books of the 20th century. Around this same time, Evans also produced important bodies of work on Cuba, the mangrove coast of Florida, and New York subway riders.

Evans joined the staff of *Fortune* in 1945, and for the next 20 years, wrote, edited, and photographed (sometimes in color) for the magazine, helping to define its distinctive documentary style. He spent much of his final decade teaching photography at Yale University (New Haven, Connecticut). A few years before he died, he discovered the instant gratification of the Polaroid SX-70 camera, often capturing individuals and the small-town signs that always captivated him. New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art holds the major archive of Evans' photographs and personal collections of other material.

Evans made this photograph of a filling station and a number of other successful images in and around Morgantown, West Virginia when he was there working for the Farm Security Administration (FSA). The car in the center of the image was probably his own, placed there after he stopped to refuel. Interestingly, the only identifiable parts of the filling station are the two pumps on the left, and they reveal how buying gasoline at this time differed from today. Each pump offered a different brand (not grade) of gas, one being AMOCO and the other American. Today, drivers can get only one company's gas at any given station.

Morgantown was a coal mining town and companies built houses to rent to their workers. Here, Evans nicely captured a row of identical homes, above his car, marching off into the distance. Visually clever, he presented one of the overhead glass globes against an equally white cloud and included not a real telephone pole but only its shadow, on the left, to break up the flat expanse of bricks that comprise the side of the building. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Walker Evans (1903–1975)

***Graveyard, Houses, and Steel Mills, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1935***

Gelatin silver print (printed c.1939), 8 x 10 inches

One of Evans' iconic Depression-Era photographs, this image packs great visual punch because of the juxtaposition of a substantial foreground object against receding planes of subject matter, a technique often later used by the admiring younger photographer Lee Friedlander (born 1934). Working for the Farm Security Administration (FSA), Evans made many exposures in Bethlehem, essaying graves, houses, and factories. Perhaps Evans could not resist the temptation to prominently feature a cross in an image that was made in a city named after the place of Christ's birth.

Collector Daniel Shogren has astutely observed that this image sums up the limited life of many of Bethlehem's residents: daily work in a steel mill, living in a brick row house, and, finally, a grave in the cemetery. This print came from the files of *U. S. Camera*, a monthly magazine and annual. It was reproduced in the 1939 annual, which contained a special section of about two dozen photographs from the FSA. And while they were all richly printed in photogravure, this Evans graveyard image was unceremoniously presented as a two-page spread, bleeding off the edges of the pages and bisected by the metal-ring binding. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Walker Evans (1903–1975)

***Joe's Auto Graveyard, Pennsylvania, 1935***

Gelatin silver print (printed before 1970), 7  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 9  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches

It took less than 20 years after Henry Ford's Model T began rolling off the Detroit assembly line in 1908 before they started ending up in junkyards, perhaps the earliest signs of American industrial waste. This one, in the vicinity of Easton, Pennsylvania, was next to an abandoned rail line and probably a road on which Evans was driving. The image comprises four distinctive horizontal bands, including the railroad tracks, the ménage of cars, a field, and the blank sky.

This is a memorable image, due to its contrast of manmade junk with the serene landscape. Evans used an 8 x 10-inch camera for most of his best-known images, as was the case here, and usually printed them full frame. But when he presented this image in his book *American Photographs* he severely cropped it, on both the top and bottom, eliminating much of the sky and any trace of the railroad tracks. The resulting image is noticeably different in shape than most of the others in the book and appears somewhat cramped. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Walker Evans (1903–1975)

***Main Street, Saratoga Springs, New York, 1931***

Gelatin silver print, 21 ½ x 17 inches

Made on a rainy day, this photograph utilizes the shimmering effects of wet pavement, a technique now frequently used in television dramas (though the water is usually artificially introduced to those scenes). Perched on the roof of one of Saratoga Springs' many hotels, Evans pointed his camera down the main street, whose angled parking spots are completely filled with cars. The automobiles are very similar in design, reflecting the limited choices available from manufacturers. And they are also uniformly black or very dark in color. When Henry Ford began making cars, he remarked that, "Any customer can have a car painted any color that he wants so long as it is black." The leafless trees suggest that Evans was there in early spring or late fall; their bare branches allow most of the street to be seen and they contrast with the built environment that surrounds them.

On the right are the steps and a bit of the architecture of the Grand Union Hotel. Built in 1802 (and surviving until 1953) it became the world's largest hotel and accommodated thousands of fans of thoroughbred horse racing, for which Saratoga Springs was known. Not surprisingly, Evans made other negatives of this hotel, including one in which he turned his camera slightly to the right, to make the structure's massive porch the central focus. A different image of this porch and the street scene image appear in Evans' landmark 1938 book *American Photographs*. The Museum of Modern Art in New York owns a print of this street scene. – CAP



Walker Evans (1903–1975)

***Roadside Stand, Near Birmingham, Alabama, 1936***

Gelatin silver print, 16 ¾ x 21 inches

Evans made at least three negatives of this subject, leaving his camera in the same position on his tripod. One of them has no people and, consequently, is somewhat lifeless. But the other two both include the same five figures, similarly posed. Inside the doorway are two men and a girl, shrouded in low light. Standing outside, however, are the two boys, fully illuminated and boldly holding large melons. These lads likely performed much farm work, as is suggested by their outsized hands. Evans framed his subject as he often did—frontally and symmetrically. The doorway and windows of the stand allowed background elements such as the chairs on a porch to be visible.

A favorite among Walker Evans collectors, this picture is a riot of signage and produce. A professional sign painter undoubtedly rendered the image of the fish and its attendant lettering. The pair of signs listing the river fish available that day, hung on either side of the doorway, however, is less skillfully painted. The fact that the structure is crowned with a sign advertising an “Old Reliable House Mover” suggests that perhaps F. M. Pointer was also the owner of this fish and produce stand.

“*Roadside Stand*” appeared in Evans’ important book *American Photographs*, where it was unceremoniously cropped on one side to make a square image, which is not as dynamic as the present example. A vintage print of this image is in the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Art. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Walker Evans (1903–1975)

*Sidewalk and Shopfront, New Orleans, 1935*

Gelatin silver print, 9 ¼ x 7 ½ inches

With its European-inspired Latin Quarter, New Orleans was of great interest to Evans, who had ventured early to the continent in hopes of becoming a writer. The people, streets, storefronts, and metal balconies overhead fascinated him, providing much visual delight. Here, he came across the fancifully-painted “French Opera Barber Shop,” possibly on Bourbon Street, the lifeline of the Quarter. The inconsistently painted stripes and hand-lettering were the sort of American vernacular signage that particularly appealed to Evans. While most barber shops enticed customers with their spinning, round-columned poles, here the proprietor made due with a striped rectangular pole and painted lamp globe above the doorway. How fortunate for Evans that he was able to find a woman nearby who just happened to be wearing a shirt that mimicked the stripes of the shop’s façade. The gritty nature of the Latin Quarter is evident in the cracked sidewalk and bits of refuse in the street gutter. This print was probably issued in a portfolio during the 1970s.

As was his usual practice, Evans made at least two negatives of the scene, in order to keep one for himself and hand the other over to the Farm Security Administration (FSA). Not surprisingly the woman moved slightly between the exposures, altering her facial expression and the orientation of the purse she holds in her right hand. Prints of these images are in the permanent collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Art and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Louis Faurer (1916–2001)

***Silent Salesman, Philadelphia, c.1938***

Gelatin silver print, 14 x 11 inches

Self-taught Louis Faurer was initially influenced by the great French street photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004), and first picked up a camera in 1937. He helped establish the New York photography studio of Ben Rose (1916–1980) in 1946 and then branched off on his own. He created most of his personal work during the middle of the 20th century, concentrating on the streets of New York and, at night, Times Square. Professionally, he made fashion and editorial photographs, beginning in 1947 at *Junior Bazaar*; other magazines that ran his images over the next 20 years were *Look*, *Glamour*, *Mademoiselle*, *Seventeen*, and *Vogue*.

In the 1960s, Faurer experimented with 16mm film and worked as a set photographer for a few Hollywood movies. He lived in London from 1969 to 1974, where he both worked for magazines and pursued further personal work. Upon returning to New York, he began teaching at Parsons School of Design and lecturing elsewhere. In 1984, Faurer was seriously injured in an automobile accident and never photographed again. Faurer's best known street photographs shared the same time frame and subject matter with Robert Frank (born 1924), whose accomplishments have often overshadowed those of his older friend.

Made during the Great Depression, this image presents a typical street scene in a large metropolitan area—a down-and-out man selling wares. From the sign on his storage box, we learn that the man has available blades, needles, pins, combs, and various other small items. While he stands there in somewhat worn clothing, two well-dressed—and probably employed—men pass him by, apparently paying no attention. Faurer's title for the picture was derived from the enigmatic, hand-lettered sign on the basket on top of the box, which reads, "Dad said I must earn my living too, so I am his silent salesman."

Of course, this is a sobering image, reminding us of the lengths to which the unemployed had to go to try and make ends meet after the stock market crash in 1929. However, the presence of the man's little dog adds a playful note, due in no small part to the mutt holding a tiny American flag in its jaws and wearing a diminutive hat. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Ernest Fiene (1894–1965)  
*Milltown in Winter*, 1935–1937  
Oil on canvas, 25 x 30 inches

Ernest Fiene was born in Germany, emigrating to the U.S. in 1912 and becoming a naturalized citizen in 1927. In his early years here, he studied at the National Academy of Design under Leon Kroll (1884–1974). In 1928, Fiene traveled to France and enrolled at Académie de la Grande Chaumière. His European experience concluded with a Guggenheim Fellowship that allowed him to study mural painting in Florence, Italy. Fiene both studied at the Art Students League (in 1923) and was a longtime instructor there, from 1938 to 1964. Fiene was active in art media beyond just painting, working in etching, lithography, mural painting, and book illustration. Much of his work was done at his studio in Woodstock, New York. During the 1930s he was employed by the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project (FAP). It was during this time that he created the American Scene work for which he is best known.

In 1935 to 1936, Fiene traveled in West Virginia and western Pennsylvania. This area was one of the more industrialized parts of the country and was suffering its sixth year of the Great Depression. The whole feeling of the painting *Milltown in Winter* is gray, cold, and depressing. The sky is gray-black with smoke and clouds. Fiene painted the entire side of the house in the center of the painting black. This likely reflected his attitude at this point in time. Many artists were having a hard time making a living, with most artists giving up their art and trying to earn their keep some other way. However, there is one note of hope or optimism in this painting: on the top of the hill, behind the house, is a church. It's uncertain how religious Fiene was, but it's interesting that he would place a symbol of hope above all else. The locale of this work might be Pittsburgh, as is suggested by its similarity to Fiene's painting *Winter Day, Pittsburgh* (1935–1936), which is also a gloomy, grim depiction of a milltown and its numerous smokestacks, and which also has a church spire rising up in the distant background. – DS



## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Arnold Friedman (1874–1946)

***Lennox Hill Post Office*, 1935**

Oil on board, 12 x 27 inches

Arnold Friedman was born in Queens, New York and spent his entire life there, other than a trip to Paris, France, in his mid 30s. His art education started in 1905 at the Art Students League, where he studied under Robert Henri (1865–1929) and Kenneth Hayes Miller (1876–1952). Friedman felt somewhat out of place at the League since he was probably the oldest student. He held full-time employment with the U.S. Post Office for 40 years, painting in his spare time. In 1909, he studied Impressionism in Paris, and his time there exposed him to other styles, such as Cubism. Friedman worked in several painting styles during his career, including experimenting extensively with abstraction. In 1933, he retired from the post office, spending his remaining 13 years painting full time. He was involved with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and painted a number of murals. His work was exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the National Academy of Design, both in New York, and at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia.

Friedman probably painted *Lennox Hill Post Office* as an entry for a mural competition. He would have been very familiar with the appearance and working of post offices, given his long career with the New York postal system. In the 1930s, the post office was a place to meet other people and to pick up information the government was disseminating to the general population. The people shown in this painting seem to be doing fine in the 1930s, and everyone seems to be well-dressed. Some of them even have pets! There were parts of the U.S. that did not feel the worst effects of the Great Depression, and this painting may be indicating that New York's Upper East Side (where the Lenox Hill Post Office was located, on East 70th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues) was still flourishing. – DS

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Edwin Fulwider (1913–2003)

***The Long Rail*, 1946**

Oil on board, 8 x 23 inches

Edwin Fulwider was born in the heart of the Midwest, in Bloomington, Indiana. He studied art at Purdue University in West Lafayette and the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis. While attending the Herron, he met Regionalist Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975), who was working on the Indiana mural for the 1934 Chicago World's Fair, and who would have a lasting influence on the young artist. Fulwider won the Milliken Traveling Fellowship in 1936, which allowed him to travel extensively in Europe and experience many different forms of art. He returned to the U.S. and started to win awards, such as being included in the book *Modern American Painters*, and the chance to exhibit his work at the 1939 San Francisco World's Fair.

Fulwider's teaching career, which started in 1940 and lasted until 1973, included time at Miami University (Oxford, Ohio), his alma mater, the John Herron Art Institute, and the Cornish School of Allied Arts (Seattle, Washington). In between his teaching assignments, he served in the military during World War II. Painting consumed his retirement years, and he moved to Idaho then Oregon to paint local scenes, many involving railroads.

In *The Long Rail*, Fulwider depicts a railroad track gang replacing a piece of track, probably somewhere in the middle of nowhere on the Great Plains. This process in the 1940s and before was a largely manual task where workers dug up the damaged piece of steel track and replaced it with a piece brought out on a work car. This was some of the hardest work done by men working for the railroad. Under a hot sun, none of the men depicted seem happy. Nonetheless, in the 1930s and early 1940s, with unemployment around 25 percent, these men were probably looked upon as lucky. The railroad was a favorite subject for Fulwider, and he painted many other scenes of it during his career. – DS

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Wanda Gág (1893–1946)

***Ploughed Fields*, 1928**

Gouache on sandpaper, 12 x 14 ½ inches

Wanda Gág was born in New Ulm, Minnesota into an environment in which art was a natural part of experience. Her father, painter Anton Gág (1859–1908), encouraged and instructed Wanda and her siblings in art. Gág later wrote, “As a child, I thought drawing was like eating and sleeping. I could not imagine life without it, and I was astonished when I discovered that many people did not draw at all.” After school, she studied art at the St. Paul School of Art, from 1913 to 1914, then from 1914 into 1917 studied at the Minneapolis School of Art. While at the latter, she became acquainted with artist Adolf Dehn (1895–1968; also represented in this exhibition), from Waterville, Minnesota. The two had an intimate, seven-year relationship that continued when they both moved to New York in 1918 after winning scholarships to study at the Art Students League, where Kenneth Hayes Miller (1876–1952) was one of Gág’s teachers.

Gág’s first solo exhibit, in 1926, was at New York’s Weyhe Gallery just a couple years before *Ploughed Fields* was painted. The artist frequently painted and drew landscapes in her typical curvilinear style that seems rooted in a Regionalist mode. This image may have been done in upstate New York near the Lake George home of photographer and gallery director Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), whom she likely met through Carl Zigrosser, head of Weyhe Gallery. Zigrosser and Gág both were guests in September, 1928 of Stieglitz and his wife artist Georgia O’Keeffe (1887–1986). Gág recorded in her diary from the time that she took several walks with O’Keeffe and was deeply impressed by her sincerity.

The imagery in *Ploughed Fields* is certainly like the landscape around Lake George, which is nestled in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains. The painting is an example of Gág’s innovative use of sandpaper as a base for drawings and water-based paintings. She had earlier experimented with sandpaper for making lithographic prints, and out of frugality tried drawing on some of the extra paper she had, discovering that the glittery effects of the sand and the resulting depth was much to her liking.

Gág reused the imagery of this painting, with slight adjustments, in a 1936 lithograph of the same title. The artist was, in fact, best known for her graphic works, including not only her prints but also her illustrations for the numerous children’s books she published, among them *Millions of Cats*, also of 1928, which brought her national attention. Gág loved the strong colors of her artistic hero Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) but was often dissatisfied with her own attempts at working in color instead of the black and white of her drawings and prints. Her signature on *Ploughed Fields* can be seen as her approval of this particular effort. – DM

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Herbert Gehr (1911-1983)

***Night Plowing***, c.1940s

Gelatin silver print, 11 x 13 ¾ inches

Born Edmund Bert Gerard in Berlin, Gehr led a colorful life, worked in still photography and motion pictures, and became best known for his use of artificial light at night. He commenced his professional career in 1937, when he photographed the Spanish Civil War, after which he shot newsreels in Egypt for Wide World Photos. About a year later he moved to the United States, found representation with the Black Star photo agency, and began to work for *Life*.

Gehr stayed with the magazine for more than a decade, photographing fashion, movie stars, world conflict, and other diverse subjects. He was profiled in its pages at least three times, sometimes pictured with his 2 1/4-inch-square format camera and was once described (in the September 5, 1938 issue) as "brown eyed and serious, he likes any kind of story on which he can work alone, without rubbing elbows with dozens of other photographers." Among the things that he illuminated at night for his camera were the Great Sphinx of Giza, Egypt, and a portion of New York's meat packing district. After leaving *Life* in 1950, Gehr fatally shot his wife, in an unfortunate incident precipitated by her suspecting him of having an affair, but the photographer was acquitted of second-degree murder charges. Subsequently, he became a director at ABC television, and won three Emmy Awards.

This dramatic image showcases Gehr's sometimes flamboyant use of artificial illumination at night. He placed strong lights behind a farmer on his John Deere tractor and plow, creating an otherworldly effect, as if an unidentified flying object had landed in a nearby field. The figure and his farm equipment appear largely as black silhouettes, while the windmill is fully lit with white light. Adding to the dynamism of the photograph are the diagonal shadows that seem to shoot off of the plow. This is obviously a staged image, for if the farmer was actually plowing at night the only lights would have been those on the front of the tractor. It does, however, suggest the difficult times that farmers were experiencing during the Great Depression, including having to work during both night and day to make ends meet.

Taped to the back of the print is a typed label that indicates that the exposure was eight seconds long and that the illumination Gehr used was car headlights and a few flashes. It also states that the picture won a prize in a "Speed Graphic" contest, in the industrial and scientific section. - CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Robert Gilbert (1907-1988)  
*Industrial Composition*, 1932  
Oil on canvas, 47 x 34 inches

Robert Gilbert was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana. At an early age, he moved to Santa Ana, California. Like many other artists of his time, he gravitated to New York and there he studied at the Art Students League. He took classes from George Luks (1867-1933) and was influenced by the Ashcan School of painting, the mode of painting of that time. After graduating from the League around 1930, Gilbert could not make a living by painting—like so many artists then, he was just born at the wrong time to be a full-time painter.

He moved back to Santa Ana and got a job with the Santa Ana Gas Company, which supplied a steady paycheck. Gilbert worked full-time jobs throughout his life while painting on the side, including also at the Fluor Corporation and in a position running a gift shop. His honors included winning a cash prize when he showed his work titled *Industrial* in the 13th annual painting and sculpture exhibition in 1932 at the Los Angeles Museum (forerunner to today's Los Angeles County Museum of Art). In 1933, Gilbert received critical acclaim for this painting, *Industrial Composition* (perhaps the same work shown in Los Angeles the previous year) when it was exhibited at the Laguna Beach Art Association. *Los Angeles Times* art critic Arthur Millier deemed it the best work in that exhibit, noting that it was a "poetic statement" that was related to Gilbert's experience in industry, which allowed him to feel "deeply the poetic qualities of the forces which are molding our civilization."

*Industrial Composition* has a great Industrial Art Deco feeling. Gilbert typically painted what he experienced every day at work. Perhaps he is one of the workers depicted. It's interesting to note that all three workers are on their knees in the foreground, with the large plant and huge tools towering over them—perhaps an indication of their subservience and fealty to industry. And those employed during the Great Depression likely were very grateful for the gift of having a job. - DS

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Abraham Harriton (1893–1986)

***Market Scene***, 1938

Oil on board, 29 x 23 inches

Abraham Harriton was born into a Jewish family in Bucharest, Romania. His father, a sign painter, came to New York City's Lower East Side in the late 1800s, then after establishing himself sent for his family. Harriton studied art at the National Academy of Design in New York starting in 1908 after his school teacher, whom he impressed with his talent by drawing a color picture of a turkey on the chalkboard, took him uptown to enroll him. Harriton flourished at the Academy, winning several awards such as the coveted Hallgarten Prize for painting, which came with \$100. His teachers included Kenyon Cox (1856–1919), Emil Carlsen (1853–1932), and George DeForest Brush (1855–1941).

His first solo exhibition was in 1932 at the American Contemporary Art Gallery (ACA), a locus for socially-conscious American artists. In association with the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Harriton taught drawing and painting to adults for two years, then joined the Easel Division of the Federal Art Project (FAP). He also participated in the Murals Division, painting *Plantation*, *Transportation*, *Education* (1941) for the post office in Augusta, Georgia. Harriton also taught for the left-leaning American Artists School in New York and exhibited at the John Reed Club.

*Market Scene* depicts fruit being sold from a pushcart on the street. In the background can be seen a staircase that leads up to the El, the Elevated rail service that traveled up and down Manhattan and into other boroughs of New York until the 1950s. The Third Avenue El line ran along The Bowery in the Lower East Side, which was a locus of pushcart markets starting as early as 1886. Over the years criticism was leveled about the pushcart vendors, often with an undercurrent of bigotry toward the immigrants doing the selling. Many were Jews who had come to America to escape persecution. Peddling, along with doing hand work at home, was one of a few ways to earn money if one didn't work in the garment sweatshops.

By 1905 there were so many pushcarts crammed into a relatively small area of New York that Mayor George B. McClellan created a "Commission Appointed to Investigate the Push-Cart Problem." The Commission's 1906 report noted problems when traffic could not maneuver the cart-crowded streets, but it concluded there was no special danger from the quality of food being sold at some carts. In 1938, the same year Harriton painted *Market Scene*, the issue was being problematized by Mayor Fiorella La Guardia, who claimed that the food sold was often rotten, and noted there was a particular problem with the proliferation of thousands of unlicensed, uninspected peddlers. La Guardia wanted to have all such vendors pushed into off-street market enclosures.

In Harriton's image, the fruits offered are wholesome and fresh, and they provide appealing highlights of brighter color in a largely drab scene. It seems possible that Harriton, ever aware of social issues, created a positive pushcart vendor image to counter La Guardia's attempts to besmirch the carts. – DM

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Lois Ireland (born 1928)

***Summertime*, 1949**

Oil on board, 22 x 35 inches

Lois Ireland was born in Waunakee, Wisconsin, just north of Madison, in 1928. She began taking watercolor and drawing lessons in 1940 in the home of a university art student who lived nearby. As a teenager, Ireland met John Steuart Curry (1897-1946; also represented in this exhibition) in his studio on the campus of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. At Curry's urging, she took up oil painting and began participating in the art exhibitions sponsored by the Wisconsin Rural Art Project, a university program through which Curry mentored and encouraged amateur artists across rural Wisconsin.

Ireland's early work reflects the people and the land of the rich farm country where she grew up. Although she ultimately enrolled at the University of Wisconsin, and went on to attend the Art Students League in New York, she created many of her best-known works before she reached the age of 20. These works, though exhibiting a somewhat naïve, self-taught style, are clearly in the spirit of the American Scene. This fact reflects both the artist's rural life experience and her early admiration for the work of artists like Grant Wood (1891-1942), Peter Hurd (1904-1984), and George Bellows (1882-1925), in addition to that of her mentor, Curry. Despite her professional training, Ireland ultimately chose a life as a homemaker, and painted only as an amateur through her mature years. Her work, however, has been exhibited at the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Carnegie Institute (in Pittsburgh), and the Wisconsin State Historical Society (Madison). Today, Ireland lives in Hastings, Minnesota, and still paints occasionally in her home studio.

From the time Ireland met Curry as a young girl, she idolized him and his style of art. Her painting *Summertime* looks much like many of Curry's Wisconsin landscapes. By the late 1940s, the effect of the Great Depression was disappearing rapidly, and the Dust Bowl was becoming just a memory. *Summertime* exudes a feeling of prosperity, with its lush green fields and its healthy-looking animals. Much of the country was still fundamentally agrarian, but World War II would change that. A massive movement of people like Ireland from rural farms to cities was underway, one that would continue for decades, even up until today. – DS

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Knute Heldner (1877–1952)

***Lumberjacks, Northern Minnesota***, c.1925

Oil on board, 33 x 33 inches

Knute Heldner emigrated to the U.S. in 1902 from Sweden. His early education started in Sweden at the Karlskrona Technical School, and once he was in the U.S., it continued over the years at the Minneapolis School of Art, the Art Students League in New York, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Eventually he settled in Duluth, Minnesota. To survive while he learned to paint, Heldner worked as a laborer in the iron mines of northern Minnesota, and as a lumberjack and cobbler. This fact is probably why his series of “Toil and Soil” works are so powerful—he lived the life of many of the subjects of his paintings.

In 1923, Heldner began to spend winters in New Orleans and painted subjects from that part of the country, along with scenes of Minnesota, where he lived the rest of the year. While in New Orleans in the 1930s he was employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). A special fact about Heldner was that he became the favorite artist of President Warren G. Harding and had some of his work hung in the White House.

Heldner was a socially-minded painter who identified with the working class. This painting virtually epitomizes labor. It depicts lumberjacks in northern Minnesota cutting trees in the winter. It's lunch break for the crews, and they are being called to get their food with an old-fashioned triangle rung by a man in the background. The workers get a chance to sit and rest while warming themselves next to the fire. One can only imagine what it was like to work outside all day in January or February in the below-zero temps of Minnesota. The work schedule was from dawn to dusk, six days a week. During this era, all the work was manual—no chain saws were used. This type of work was very dangerous, and a slip of an axe could cause a deadly injury, as could a falling tree that landed wrong. – DS



## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Knute Heldner (1877–1952)

***The Price of Labor***, c.1925

Oil on board, 41 x 46 inches

This painting depicts a mining accident at an open pit mine, probably in northern Minnesota. Workers in the 1930s did not have the protections offered to workers today. There was no Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) of the government to protect workers from dangerous conditions.

*The Price of Labor* depicts workers gathered respectfully and mournfully around a fellow worker who is either severely hurt or dead. They acknowledge the young man's sacrifice, but are also likely thinking that any one of them could be laying there. The small child in the lower center of the image can be assumed to be related to the deceased or injured man laid on the mine car. One wonders what will become of the child and the rest of the man's family, if the mine owners will help them or if they will be left to fend for themselves. In the era in which *The Price of Labor* was painted, there was a strong union effort in many industries, which attempted to organize and help workers. Of course, management fought this movement every which way it could. – DS

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Lewis W. Hine (1874–1940)

***Homework, Making Artificial Flowers, New York, 1908***

Gelatin silver print (printed c.1940), 4 ½ x 6 ½ inches

Lewis Wickes Hine is widely known for his straightforward pictures of children working on the streets and in factories of early 20th-century America. He was a sociologist who turned to photography in order to advance the social-reform movement of the time. Hine taught botany and nature studies at New York's Ethical Culture School, and photographed many European immigrants arriving at Ellis Island. In 1908, he began working for the National Child Labor Committee, an early nonprofit organization dedicated to exposing the harm done to underage American workers.

During the 1910s, Hine traveled throughout much of the eastern half of the United States, photographing children laboring in mills, mines, fields, and sweatshops, and on urban streets. His images, drawn from nearly 5,000 5 x 7 inch negatives, were widely reproduced and exhibited, helping to persuade the federal government to enact child labor laws. During World War I, Hine worked for the Red Cross in the European theater. He began his last important body of work—documenting the construction of the Empire State Building—in 1930. Hines' book *Men at Work* contains many images from this project, along with other photographs of adult laborers. Other significant projects he undertook were the Tennessee Valley Authority building of dams, and positions at the National Research Project and the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

There are nearly 50 photographs by Hine of people making artificial flowers (out of silk) in the National Child Labor Committee Collection at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., including a print of this one. Their print indicates that the subjects here are the Malatestas, an Italian immigrant family, including Frank, the father; John, age 11; and Lizzie, age four (first names of the mother and other boy not recorded). They were paid six cents for each gross (144) of flowers they produced, and averaged about 10 a day, resulting in a grand income of 60 cents per day. Mr. Malatesta's poor health did not allow him to work outside of the home. The boys worked Saturday afternoons and evenings until 10 o'clock, and little Lizzie's job was to separate the petals. The Malatestas' tenement apartment was located at 122 Sullivan Street, in New York.

Hine shows everyone engrossed in their work, no one looking up at the camera. This was meticulous piecework, perhaps benefiting from the small hands of the children. Behind the family, bundles of the flowers are visible on top of two pieces of furniture. Appropriately, flower imagery adorns the table cloth on which they are working and fabric in the background. This very print was part of the *Lewis Hine Memorial Portfolio*, published in 1940, the year of Hine's death. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Lewis W. Hine (1874–1940)

***Spinner, Vivian Cotton Mill, Cherryville, North Carolina, 1908***

Gelatin silver print, 5 x 6 7/8 inches

When Hine made this photograph, the girl depicted had been working at the mill for two years. Her job, as a doffer, was to monitor the machine for breaks and snags in the thread and to remove full spindles and replace them with empty ones. Here, both of her hands are touching the spinning machine, putting her fingers and hands at risk, but, smartly, she has her long hair gathered up, to avoid it getting caught in the machinery. Her tattered smock is a clear indicator of the low wages she made at the job.

Spinning mills were one of Hine's frequent subjects, while exposing the dangerous working conditions to which thousands of the country's young people were subjected to in the early 20th century. He made this photograph the very year he began working for the National Child Labor Committee, in 1908. He framed many of these images similarly, with a child in the foreground and the hundreds of spindles receding into the out-of-focus background. Adult supervisors or fellow child laborers were sometimes also visible, such as the two here, on the right. The vastness of the Vivian Mill is evident from the arched roof overhead. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Joe Jones (1909–1963)

***Levee*, 1933**

Oil on canvas, 30 x 41 inches

Joe Jones was born in St. Louis, Missouri to first-generation working-class immigrant parents, and was the youngest of five children. He left school in the eighth grade, and started working for his father as a house painter. Other than a minor decorative arts class in 1927, he was self-taught in art. In 1930, he started to enter sketches in local art contests. His first prize was \$100 at the St. Louis Artists Guild in 1931. Also in 1931, Jones had his first solo show, of 26 oil paintings. At that time, he was living the bohemian lifestyle of an artist and joined the "New Hats," an organization devoted to modernism in art. By 1932, Jones was selling paintings that exhibited his version of modernism while still being acceptable to local St. Louis art collectors.

1933 was a pivotal year for the artist. He traveled east to study art for the first time, with his new art patron, Elizabeth Green, and ended up joining the Communist Party. Back in St. Louis, Jones started to teach art to youth, many of whom were unemployed African-Americans. In late 1934, he started working for the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). This led to mural commissions over the next few years, in post offices in Kansas, Arkansas, and Missouri. He also had many one person shows at the Associated American Artists Gallery and the ACA Galleries, both in New York City. In 1937, Jones was awarded a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. During World War II, he was assigned to the War Art Unit. In the late 1940s and 1950s, his art approach changed from his social realist manner to more marketable corporate work, in order to support his growing family. His untimely death in 1963, from a heart attack at the young age of 54, cut short a brilliant career.

1933 was a transitional year for Jones, and *Levee* reflects that. The Depression in St. Louis resulted in 25 percent unemployment in general, and in the African-American community, it was close to 80 percent. Jones' general frame of mind on the period must have been pretty bleak. His social-realist approach in painting was becoming dominant. During his east coast trip, when he joined the Communist party, he took up the banner of "Worker Exploitation by the Wealthy Class." *Levee* shows two workers, possibly African-Americans, stooped over and carrying heavy loads. The general tone of the image is dark and gray. *Levee* was still a saleable painting to Jones' St. Louis patrons, but over the next year, his paintings became even more socially outspoken and, therefore, less palatable to many buyers. The dark, rich palate of this painting is carried through to future classic Jones paintings, such as his *Roustabouts* and his *We Demand*, both dated 1934. – DS

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Theo Jung (1906–1996)

***Newsboys, Jackson, Ohio, 1936***

Gelatin silver print (printed later), 6 ¾ x 9 ½ inches

Theo Jung's main contribution as a Depression-Era photographer was documenting American poverty and other social ills. Born in Vienna, Austria, he immigrated in 1912 to Chicago to join his mother. He became interested in photography in his youth and photographed with a snapshot camera throughout college. Jung also showed skill in the graphic arts, which landed him a job as a chart draftsman with the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), in Washington, D.C. in about 1935. There, his main task was developing unemployment statistics, which helped him develop a deep concern for the underprivileged.

Jung met Roy Stryker (1893–1975), the photographic director of the Resettlement Administration, who hired him as a photographer. He was assigned agricultural subjects in the states of Indiana, Ohio, and Maryland. However, after only one year Jung left the agency, which was soon renamed the Farm Security Administration (FSA). He then worked for the government's Consumer's Council and the magazine *Consumer's Guide*. Beginning in the early 1940s, Jung returned to the graphic arts, designing and illustrating books. He worked as a photographer and art director for various publications and advertising agencies. The Library of Congress owns about 500 of his negatives and photographic prints from his government work.

Jung came across the boys selling newspapers in this photograph during the one year he worked for the government's Resettlement Administration, in 1936. Fanning out to small towns such as Jackson, located about 50 miles south of Ohio's capital, Columbus, Jung turned his camera on individuals in rural areas as well as population centers. Jackson, with about 6,000 people (both then and now), had a daily newspaper, but these lads are hawking the *Columbus Dispatch*, suggesting that the local paper may not have published on Sundays. According to the Library of Congress, Jung made this picture in April of 1936, and it may have been on Easter Sunday.

The boys probably situated themselves on Jackson's main street, to maximize sales, and two are propped on the fender of an angle-parked automobile. Lost in conversation, they ignore the photographer and enjoy the spring-time sunlight. While the boys form a cluster of humankind in the center of the image, the cars form a pattern of industrially manufactured machines. And there is a certain symmetry in the fact that there are three of each—boys and autos. The Library of Congress owns the original negative for this photograph, along with two variants of the boys with the cars and another of them looking in a storefront window. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Consuelo Kanaga (1894–1978)

*Untitled*, c.1940

Gelatin silver print, 5 ¼ x 6 ⅞ inches

Consuelo Kanaga grew up in New England in a family concerned with social justice and, as an adult, used her camera to further liberal causes. She is perhaps best known for photographing poor black people starting in the 1930s. Her first job was with the *San Francisco Chronicle* as a writer and photographer. She lived most of her life in California and New York City, moving back and forth a number of times.

During the 1920s she was influenced by Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) to infuse artistic elements into her documentary pictures. At this time, she worked as a photographic retoucher and for a newspaper in New York, and she traveled to France, Germany, and Italy. Back in San Francisco around 1930, she established a portrait studio there and became a member of Group f.64, which included fellow straight photographers Ansel Adams (1902–1984), Edward Weston (1886–1958), and Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976; Cunningham is also represented in this exhibition). Living again in New York in the late 1930s, Kanaga became involved in radical politics, joined the Photo League, a cooperative of socially-conscious New York photographers, and completed assignments for mainstream magazines like *Good Housekeeping*. One of her pictures, depicting a black mother and two young children, was included in the landmark 1955 exhibition *The Family of Man* at New York's Museum of Modern Art. Subsequently Kanaga taught photography and saw her pictures reproduced in progressive publications such as *The New Masses*. During the Civil Rights movement of the mid-1960s, Kanaga photographed residents of Georgia and even got arrested.

Unfortunately, the location of this photograph was not recorded, but it still serves as a good representation of the back-breaking work of farm field hands, before the widespread use of machinery. The image likely was meant to call to mind the famed 1857 painting *The Gleaners* by French artist Jean-François Millet (1814–1875), a well-known comment on the harsh lives of the peasant class in France. Stooping and bending over in positions similar to those in the painting, the three figures in Kanaga's photograph appear to be planting seedlings in a vast field. They all wear protective gear against the elements—boots, hats, and long-sleeved shirts. A variety of motor vehicles appear in the distance (bus, car, and truck), used to transport both the hired help and supervisors to the site. Strategically positioning her camera so that little of the subjects appeared above the horizon line, Kanaga allowed more than half of the image to be filled with the sky of small cumulus clouds, their brightness set off against the rich, black soil in which the workers toil. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Dorothea Lange (1895–1965)

***On the Road Towards Los Angeles, 1937***

Gelatin silver print (printed no later than 1953), 7 7/8 x 10 inches

Dorothea Lange was one of the major American documentary photographers during the middle of the 20th century. Her image *Migrant Mother*, depicting a poor woman with three of her children, is one of the most iconic images of its time. In the mid-1910s, she studied photography with the pictorialist Clarence H. White (1871–1925), and worked in various New York portrait studios. In 1919, she opened her own studio in San Francisco, where her subjects were some of the city's most prominent citizens. Lange worked for the federal government beginning in 1935, documenting the Great Depression for the Farm Security Administration (FSA), the Department of Agricultural Economics, and the Office of War Information. In 1939 Lange and her husband, Paul S. Taylor, published their picture-text collaboration, *An American Exodus*. During World War II she also turned her camera on interned Japanese-American citizens.

Lange taught photography during the 1940s at the California School of Fine Art in San Francisco, at the invitation of Ansel Adams (1902–1984), and helped found *Aperture* magazine in 1952, with Minor White (1908–1976) and others. During the 1950s she produced picture essays for *Life* magazine and traveled extensively, to South America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. A major retrospective of her work opened in New York at the Museum of Modern Art in January 1966, a few months after she died.

Just like in Margaret Bourke-White's use of an optimistic billboard in her famous 1937 photograph *Louisville Flood* (an example of which is also in this exhibition), Lange did the same in this picture. This roadside sign was actually meant for people driving by, suggesting that taking the railroad (Southern Pacific) was a more relaxing way to travel than by car. Lange, however, included two people walking to their destination, only emphasizing the message of the billboard. While these individuals were propelling themselves on foot and carrying luggage, the well-dressed man in the sign, by contrast, is reclining in a train seat, enjoying himself, while his bags are handled by others.

A note on the back of this print was apparently written by a photo editor, regarding payment to Lange for reproducing this photograph. It states, "I told her that she would be paid space rates, and she said, technically, she couldn't be paid for the migrant picture [perhaps because it was done on assignment for a government agency]. However, it seems fair to make some sort of adjustment." – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Dorothea Lange (1895–1965)

*Plantation Overseer and his Field Hands, near Clarksdale, Mississippi, 1936*

Gelatin silver print, 7 ½ x 9 ½ inches

Lange made over one hundred negatives on plantations in the Deep South for the Farm Security Administration (FSA), most of which now are held by the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In this one, she contrasts the wealth and weight of the white boss with the African-American workers, who are relegated to the background. The overseer boldly steals the scene, by inhabiting the foreground and by his confident body position—foot on fender and hand on knee. Undoubtedly the automobile belonged to him, and its sleek, bulbous shape differs from the worn wood of the country store on the steps of which the workers sit.

This print includes at the left a bit of the face, hands, and coat of Lange's husband, agricultural economist Paul Taylor—which she usually cropped out. She made at least one other exposure of this scene, in which all the figures have moved slightly. – CAP



## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Dorothea Lange (1895–1965)

***White Angel Breadline, San Francisco, 1932***

Gelatin silver print (printed c.1965), 14 x 11 inches

Lange made this image outside the White Angel soup kitchen in an unsavory section of San Francisco known as the White Angel Jungle. This facility alone, funded completely by donations, served over one million meals over a three-year period. While most of the hungry, unemployed men face away from her camera, her main subject, a man with an empty tin cup and hands folded, is seen more frontally, though his eyes are shielded by the brim of his hat. He also seems the most downtrodden of the individuals, unshaven and more shabbily dressed. The angled wooden slats in the foreground seem to hem in the men, who form not an organized line but, rather, a small bunched-up crowd of needy humans.

The image is a fitting portrait of the ravages of the Great Depression and became, in Lange's own words, one of her "most famed photographs." She described her experience making *White Angel Breadline* by recounting that "I made that on the first day I ever went out in an area where people said, 'Oh, don't go there.' It was the first day that I ever made a photograph on the street." – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Russell Lee (1903–1986)

***Bar in Craigsville, Minnesota, 1935***

Gelatin silver print, 7 ½ x 9 ¾ inches

Russell Lee grew up in the American Midwest and embraced middle-class values throughout his life. He received an engineering degree in 1925 from Lehigh University (Bethlehem, Pennsylvania) and then was employed for about five years as a chemical engineer. Unhappy with this work, Lee quit his job, started to make paintings, and moved to San Francisco in 1929. During the early 1930s, he relocated to New York state, where he spent summers in the artist colony of Woodstock and winters in New York City. About this time, he traveled to Germany, the Soviet Union, and eastern European countries.

In 1935 Lee commenced using a camera to aid his paintings, but ended up pursuing photography full time. His first serious subjects were the workers and poor conditions of Pennsylvania coal mines. He became acquainted with the artist/photographer Ben Shahn (1898–1969), who was doing documentary work for the Historic Division of what was soon renamed the Farm Security Administration (FSA), based in Washington, D.C. In 1936, Lee himself secured an assignment from the FSA to photograph homestead housing projects in New Jersey, and shortly thereafter was hired full time. During the late 1930s, he covered the Midwest, West Coast, and states such as Texas and New Mexico. Hundreds of his photographs were reproduced in newspapers and magazines such as *Life*, *Look*, *Fortune*, and *U.S. Camera*. During World War II, Lee served in the U.S. Air Transport Command, as an aerial photographer. Afterwards, he moved to Austin, Texas, where he taught photography at the state university, from 1965 to 1973.

In 1935 there were at least two bars in the unincorporated community of Craigsville, in Northern Minnesota, where lumberjacks and women drank. And Lee photographed inside both of them for the FSA, sometimes strategically positioning himself behind the bar. This made sense, as most of the customers would then be facing his lens, and it gave the impression of an insider's look at the drinkers, namely that of a bartender.

The older man at the right in this image also appears in Lee's other photograph of a *Bar in Craigsville, Minnesota* (an example of which is in the Shogren-Meyer Collection but is not in this exhibition). All four people at the bar have glasses with drinks and three of them are drinking or about to. This convivial image has been seen by millions of television viewers, because the makers of the sitcom *Cheers* used a colorized version of it in its credits. Since this negative, owned by the Library of Congress, is in the public domain, neither the photographer nor the library ever received any compensation for its use. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Russell Lee (1903–1986)

***Farm Security Administration Clients at Home, Hidalgo County, Texas, 1939***

Gelatin silver print (printed 1970s), 9 ¾ x 13 ⅞ inches

The Library of Congress owns over 150 negatives that Lee made in Hidalgo County, Texas, including the one for this image. Among Lee's most memorable pictures, it casually presents a farming couple relaxing in their living room after a hard day of work. The man reads a magazine, most likely *Life*, and the woman appears to be sewing. Prominently placed between the two, in the center of the photograph, is a new radio, representing communication from the outside world and the couple's modest financial wherewithal, though the man could use a new pair of socks. Undoubtedly, they listened whenever President Franklin D. Roosevelt gave one of his evening "fireside chats" from the White House. The couple took out a loan from the government's Farm Security Administration (FSA) to help them purchase their farm, making them FSA clients.

Working indoors with limited light, Lee had to use a flash for this exposure, producing some reflection off of the radio and baseboard. The two small studio portraits on top of the radio are certainly the husband and wife, in younger years, perhaps when they got married. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Russell Lee (1903–1986)

***Man with Sign***, 1935

Gelatin silver print, 13 ¼ x 9 inches

Similar to the *Silent Salesman*, *Philadelphia* photograph (c.1938) by Louis Faurer (1916–2001) in this exhibition, this image shows a down-and-out man working a city sidewalk, while better-off people pass him by. Adding to the difficulty of the situation is the inclement weather New York was experiencing on this winter day. The placard that the man holds advertises an appliance store on Sixth Avenue, possibly the street seen here. It promotes reduced prices on products by manufacturers such as Hotpoint, Westinghouse, and (appropriately enough) Frigidaire. Among the identifiable businesses on this block are a beauty shop and Lerner Shops, a women's clothing store.

The vulnerability of the human subject here is made evident by the snow gathering on his clothes as well as by his stooped position. At the moment that Lee snapped his camera the man had removed his glove to either put some food in his mouth or to warm his hand with his breath. This activity, along with the falling snow and the puddles of water, help to create a chilly scene. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Russell Lee (1903–1986)

***Unemployed, New York, Winter, 1935–1936***

Gelatin silver print, 9 ¼ x 13 inches

During the 1930s, it was easy to come across lines of people looking for assistance or goods to buy. The queue that Lee found here may have comprised of men looking for work or applying for government benefits, seemingly waiting for a service window to open.

The economic calamity that was the Great Depression commenced in earnest on October 29, 1929 (known as Black Tuesday), when the New York stock market crashed. Economies throughout the world were severely affected, as were the poor, members of the middle-class, and wealthy individuals. Between 1929 and 1932 in the United States, unemployment hit 25 percent, wholesale prices dropped 32 percent, industrial production fell 46 percent, and foreign trade plummeted 70 percent. Contributing to the woes of American farmers was severe drought that hit the heartland, drying up the country's fertile bread basket. For most of the globe, the Depression lasted throughout the 1930s, but some countries did not fully recover until the beginning of World War II. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Nathan Lerner (1913–1997)

***Railroad Roundhouse, Chicago, 1936***

Gelatin silver print (printed 1983), 11 ½ x 8 ¼ inches

Nathan Lerner grew up in a Ukrainian household in Chicago, the city where he spent most of his life. He made both experimental and straightforward photographs and became nationally known as an industrial designer of furniture. In the early 1930s he began to photograph and study painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1936, he photographed the effects of the Great Depression in Illinois, New Mexico, and San Francisco.

Returning to Chicago a year later, he enrolled at the New Bauhaus, studying under László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946) and the sculptor Alexander Archipenko (1887–1964), and was soon teaching photography workshops at the school. In 1942, Lerner helped develop a machine that was used to make bent plywood chairs, and during World War II he served as a civilian designer for the U.S. Navy in New York. After the war, he returned to the New Bauhaus, to teach product design for about five years. In 1949, he left the school to establish what would become Lerner Design Associates, which operated until 1973. He returned to teaching, for four years around 1970, as a visiting professor in design philosophy at the University of Illinois, Chicago. Lerner became intrigued with Japan, to which he took nearly 10 trips during the 1970s and 1980s. Late in life he also photographed in Mexico and numerous European countries.

Built primarily to store locomotives, railroad roundhouses were necessary because many engines did not function very well in reverse. This structure allowed them to move onto a turntable (seen here on the left), which then rotated and allowed the locomotives to back up only a short distance, into the shelter. Railway roundhouses were large structures, as is evident here, comprised of many sets of tracks converging on the roundtable. The two workers venturing through this Chicago roundhouse are dwarfed by the size of the facility and the power of the engines.

The pattern of tracks and repetition of the wooden doors in Lerner's image make for a dramatic composition. It is anchored by the locomotive in the lower right corner and a train car (numbered "1600") diagonally opposite it. Lerner so liked this image that he included it in a portfolio of only 15 prints that he published in 1978. - CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Guy MacCoy (1904–1981)

***Resting***, 1935

Oil on canvas, 22 x 28 inches

Guy MacCoy started life in Valley Falls, Kansas. His studies in art were at the Kansas City Art Institute, and then after he moved on to New York City, at the Art Students League. He took classes from Anthony Angarola (1893–1929), Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975), Jan Matulka (1890–1972), and Ernest Lawson (1873–1939). With this type of educational background, he was perfect to start painting murals, which he did for the Brooklyn Industrial High School and the First National Bank in Lubbock, Texas. During this time, he became a supervisor in the Federal Art Project (FAP). In 1947, MacCoy moved to California and his career changed paths more into printmaking, including serigraphy. Today MacCoy is considered one of the pioneers in silkscreen printing. He co-founded the Western Serigraphy Society, and he taught at Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. After retirement, he continued to create various types of art but concentrated on serigraphs and other kinds of prints.

This is one of my favorite paintings. The two guys with oversized hands resting in the foreground of the painting represent the nobility of work. The farm equipment that the men were using sits in the background, ready for when they have finished resting. One can sense that the painter felt that work, especially in agriculture, was a noble occupation. In the 1930s, farming was under major stress. But there is no stress in this painting. There are crops stacked up in the field behind the men that look like small pyramids. Just having crops at this time during the Great Depression was a good thing, no matter what they looked like.

The abstracted and stylized imagery in this work is typical of MacCoy. Such a Modernist approach to painting is rather atypical for many artists in this time. MacCoy's prints also show this way of working. – DS

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Paul Meltsner (1905–1966)

***Earth and Sky***, c.1935–1940

Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches

Paul Meltsner was born in New York City and spent the better part of his life there, though later he had a studio in Woodstock in upstate New York and lived there. He was very active in the 1930s with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as a painter and competed for mural projects. Much of his work in this period had an industrial feel to it. Toward the end of the 1930s, Meltsner became active in painting portraits, particularly of show business personalities. His portraiture was significant during World War II, when he helped the war bond effort by auctioning paintings of famous people. A portrait he did of Albert Einstein in this context resulted in over \$1 million earned for the program. Meltsner's paintings are in the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, both in Washington, D.C., and in the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

During the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, no industry or occupation was hit harder or longer than agriculture. Meltsner's *Earth and Sky* connects with the difficulties encountered in farming at that time. The main farmer, in the foreground of the painting, has a hard, determined look that extends all the way down to his clenched fingers on the steering wheel of his tractor. The farm workers operating the machinery in the background look similarly determined and concerned. The skies above the fields are gray, and the tree to the right is dead, both symbolizing the general concerns of the farm economy. In this picture of the late 1930s, there are at least crops to harvest—although prices were still very low.

A huge change was taking place in the U.S. on farms in this period, as mechanization was replacing tenant farmers. Perhaps the men depicted here were once tenant farmers now trained to run machinery, and they are using mechanization to try to keep ahead of foreclosure, a looming concern for many during the Great Depression. – DS



## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Hansel Mieth (1909–1998)

### ***Boys on the Road*, 1936**

Gelatin silver print (printed later), 12 7/8 x 9 5/8 inches

Born Johanna Mieth in Germany, Hansel partnered with Otto Hagel (1909–1973) for much of their adult lives, making social, documentary, and journalistic photographs. They traveled around Europe early on and then immigrated separately to the United States, reuniting in California in 1930. During the Great Depression, they worked in construction and agriculture, before turning their cameras on poor people and laborers in Sacramento, Oakland, and San Francisco.

Mieth became a staff photographer for *Life* in 1936, the year the magazine began publication. She worked there for about 10 years, until she was receiving fewer and fewer assignments. Due to their liberal beliefs, the couple was asked to testify before the Un-American Activities Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, but they refused and then fled San Francisco to establish and run a self-sufficient farm. Mieth and Hagel continued to collaboratively photograph and write about the American Scene from the 1950s to 1970s, and landed some photo essays back at *Life*. Among their interests during this time was the Pomo Native Americans, in Sonoma County, California. After Hagel's death in 1973, Mieth still pursued social and political causes. The couple's first retrospective occurred in Germany in 1983, showcasing their American work from 1929 to 1971. The Hansel Mieth/Otto Hagel archive of photographs and papers is held at the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson.

Mieth ventured into a railroad yard to capture this image of two stowaways peering out of a car door, probably on the lookout for security guards. For unemployed drifters, they appear fairly well-dressed, wearing hats and one even sporting a necktie. The boxcar may be considered both a means of escape for these fellows and a container from which they were hoping to eventually flee. Despite the poor economic state in which the subjects probably found themselves, the image is somewhat light-hearted, due to each man gazing in a different direction and the odd position of one hat, as if it is about to fall off the owner's head.

This image appeared in the *U. S. Camera Annual 1939*, as a full-page, screen-gravure illustration, titled *General Delivery*. Mieth indicated that it was taken in San Francisco and she stated, "This is part of a story on wandering youth I have somewhere in my files. Thousands of these kids roam the highways, strike a town, look for a job, stay if they find one, or move on otherwise." – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Edward Millman (1907-1964)

***Oil Drillers*, 1940**

Oil on canvas, 29 x 24 inches

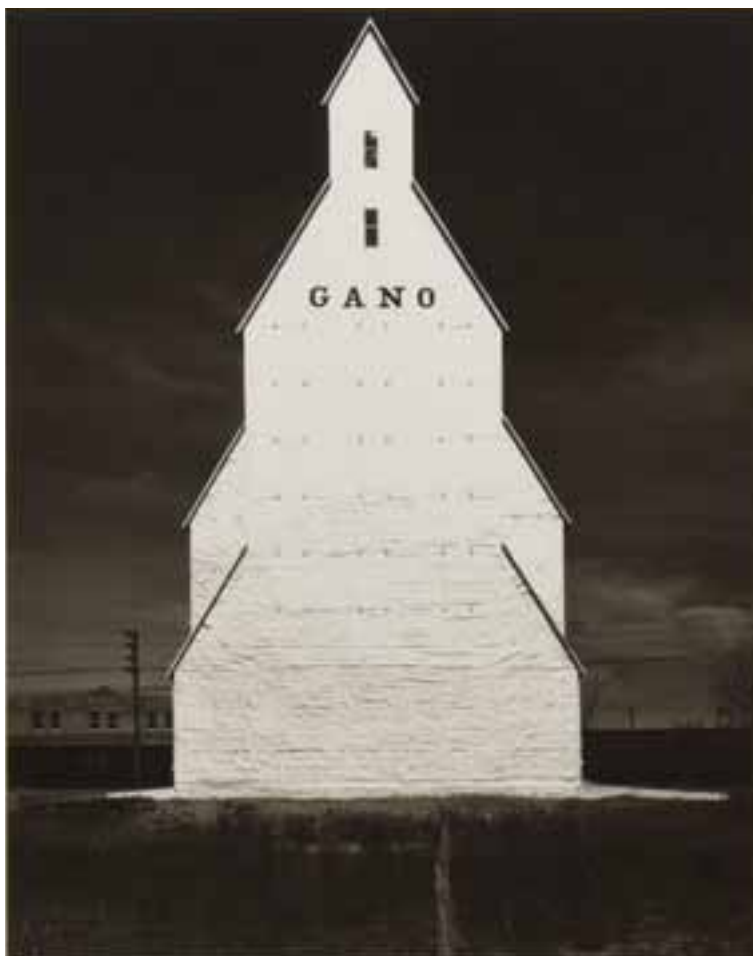
Edward Millman was born in Chicago and started his art education there under Leon Kroll (1884-1974) at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the 1920s. In the 1930s he traveled to Mexico to study mural painting with Diego Rivera (1886-1957) and José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949). Millman returned to Chicago and landed a major mural project in 1933 for the Century of Progress International Exposition, also known as the Chicago World's Fair. This led to more mural projects through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and finally to him being selected as the Illinois Director of the WPA mural division in 1936.

During his time in Chicago, Millman also taught at Hull House, which aimed to provide social and educational opportunities for the working class, in particular recent immigrants. In 1943, the artist joined the Navy as part of the Combat Artist Program. His tour of duty took him to the Pacific Theater where he saw combat and recorded U.S. forces in action. After the war, he received a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 1947, he began to teach and lecture at many universities and colleges across the U.S. Millman moved to New York in 1956 and taught at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute School of Architecture in Troy, New York, and he had studios in both Woodstock, and New York City.

The subject of much of Millman's work was the struggle of the working class to survive the Depression. In 1940, when he painted *Oil Drillers*, the three workers depicted were lucky to be working. This was not easy work—it was hard and dangerous. If one were to fast forward to today, it's likely one would see a similar scene in North Dakota oil fields. This type of work is still difficult. It shows that Millman respected these workers and their work ethic. The expressions on the men's faces seem to be serious. This could be because they knew they were fortunate to be working, or because their work was hard.

The foreground of the painting is dark, yet its background is light—perhaps the artist's indication that better times are coming. But the winds of war were starting to blow, and oil was going to be a vital resource. Maybe these three workers, like Millman himself, soon would be volunteering to serve in the military. – DS

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Wright Morris (1910–1998)

***Gano Grain Elevator, Western Kansas, 1940***

Gelatin silver print (printed c.1980), 9 ½ x 7 ½ inches

Wright Morris was born in a small town in Nebraska, the state that appeared in much of his writings and pictures. He was a prolific author, in numerous genres, and his photographs show an interest in vernacular architecture, like many by the great Depression-Era photographer Walker Evans (1903–1975; also represented in this exhibition). Morris grew up in Omaha and Chicago and spent some summers on family farms in Texas and back in Nebraska. As a young adult he headed to California, where he attended Pacific Union College (in Angwin) and Pomona College (in Claremont) in the early 1930s. During this and subsequent decades, he journeyed to France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Greece, and Mexico.

Morris became interested in photography around 1933, when he traveled through much of the United States with a camera. He received two Guggenheim Fellowships, which helped fund time in Nebraska that resulted in his first two photo-texts, *The Inhabitants* (1946) and *The Home Place* (1948). Settling in California, he taught at San Francisco State College from 1963 to 1975. He wrote at least 40 books, including 20 novels, six collections of short stories, six photo-texts, four autobiographies, and four collections of essays. He received wide recognition for his publications, capturing the National Book Award, the American Book Award, the Mark Twain Award, a Life Achievement Award (from the National Endowment of the Arts), plus others.

Growing up in America's heartland, Morris fell in love with grain elevators, those modest, rural skyscrapers of the Midwestern Plains. This one, sandwiched between a wire fence in the foreground and telephone poles behind it, was built by Gano Grain, an agricultural business that operated until it merged with another company in 1947, shortly after Morris made this picture.

The striking structure points upward with four sets of steeply sloped roofs, appearing like a tapered arrow. The largely unadorned façade appears to be sheathed in metal, which accounts for its blinding whiteness, reflecting strong mid-day sunlight. The builders playfully cut out two small windows near the elevator's top and apparently believed that the word "Gano" stood on its own. At least two sets of railroad cars are visible in the background, the means of transportation necessary for getting the grain stored in the elevators to market. Morris chose to include *Gano* in his most important book, *The Inhabitants* (1946). – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Carl Mydans (1907–2004)

***Typical Farmer Group of Prairie City, Missouri, 1936***

Gelatin silver print, 7 ½ x 9 ¾ inches

Carl Mydans enjoyed a long career as a photojournalist during the middle of the 20th century, working for magazines and extensively taking photographs during World War II. He studied journalism at Boston University, learned the photographic process, and upon graduation, became a reporter for *American Banker*, a daily trade newspaper. He eventually started working with a 35mm camera and selling pictures to *Time* and other periodicals.

For the year of 1935, Mydans worked for the government's Resettlement Administration (later named the Farm Security Administration or FSA). He traveled through New England and the South, documenting poor people and the Depression's challenging economic conditions. He was among the earliest photographers hired by *Life* when it began in 1936, and he stayed with the magazine until it folded, nearly 40 years later. His first assignment sent him to photograph an oil boom in a small Texas town. Shortly thereafter he married Shelley Smith, a *Life* staff writer, and the pair worked side by side for most of their careers. Among the defining moments during World War II that Mydans captured with his camera were General Douglas MacArthur striding ashore in the Philippines, and the signing of Japan's surrender aboard the U.S.S. Missouri. While covering the war in Manila, he and his wife were captured by incoming Japanese troops in early 1942, and were held for two years. Sometime after the war, Mydans ended up in Tokyo, becoming the head of Time-Life's bureau there.

This "typical farmer group" demonstrates the thousands of farmers who were idled during the Great Depression, due to drought and losing their farms. Mydans found them huddled together outside a small-town Missouri storefront that displays products that they may not have been able to afford. Ironically, the one who is reading has the use of only one eye, and he may have been reading from a newspaper out loud for his colleagues, who might have been illiterate.

The diagonal composition and gazes of the men directs our attention to this farmer on the right, who is the only one wearing bib overalls. The store products present a nice contrast of spherical, raw potatoes and factory packaged goods. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Thomas Nagai (1886–1966)  
***Still Life by the Window***, c.1935–1940  
Oil on canvas, 30 x 20 inches

Thomas Nagai was born Tomizo Nagai in a village north of Tokyo, Japan, and in his youth trained there in the traditional manner of Japanese painting, following the model of his grandfather Ryosuke Nagai, a professional painter. Nagai changed his given name to Thomas when he came to the United States in 1906 to study oil painting. He studied at the Art Students League under Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975) in 1924 through 1927, and he became friends with other artists including fellow Japanese painter Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1889–1953), Gershon Benjamin (1899–1985), and Milton Avery (1885–1965), the latter who painted his portrait in 1929. Nagai lived in New York City and summered in Gloucester, Massachusetts for a number of years.

Nagai exhibited to acclaim in the 1930s, in solo and group shows, the latter including exhibits with other Japanese artists such as the more renowned Kuniyoshi. Nagai was employed by the New Deal Federal Art Project (FAP) from 1935 to 1937 but had to drop out after new legislation disallowed foreign nationals to work on Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects. The artist had applied for citizenship several times but it had never been granted. Both he and Kuniyoshi were part of an ad hoc "Committee of Japanese Artists Resident in New York City" that, soon after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, sent letters to President and Mrs. Roosevelt and others. These were a declaration against Japan, which the committee described as "part of the Fascist war machine" against which they would "bear arms if necessary to insure the final victory for the Democratic forces of the World."

*Still Life by the Window* is one of several paintings in which the artist cleverly combined an interior scene featuring a still life, with a landscape or cityscape seen out a window. The artist contrasts the brilliant colors and the luxuriant forms of the pitcher, fruits and vegetables, and potted plant near the window, with the somewhat drabber imagery of New York City beyond. A review of the Nagai's 1935 solo exhibition at New York's La Salle Gallery cited his combination of influences from both his early training in Japan and his studies in the U.S. It noted, for example, buildings in his work that seemed to have "pagoda-like" qualities, which perhaps also applies to the ubiquitous New York rooftop water towers in this painting. The plant at the right foreground has calligraphic lines that may relate to Nagai's training in Japan.

The evident prosperity of the interior imagery may suggest that Nagai was relatively untouched by the Depression, or it may suggest a dating later in the 1930s than other known works of its sort, which all date to 1936 or earlier. This *Still Life by the Window* may, in fact, be a work mentioned in a *New York Times* review of Nagai's 1938 solo exhibition at the Uptown Gallery. There critic Howard Devree noted, as evidence of Nagai's progress, an oil painting *Interior* with a "well-realized landscape vista seen through a window." – DM

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Dale Nichols (1904–1995)  
*Journey Home*, c.1948  
Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches

Dale Nichols was born to a farming family near the small Nebraska town of David City. Although he, like the rest of his family, worked hard on their farm, he was encouraged in his artistic pursuits, which included not only visual art but also music. His maternal grandfather made it financially possible for Nichols to move to Chicago at age 20 to study art at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts.

Nichols studied there for only a short time then found work doing lettering for calendars, while supplementing his income playing jazz piano in a Chicago band. He worked for 15 years as a commercial artist during his time in Chicago. But he was able to transition to being a painter with relative ease, and by 1939 one of his paintings, the 1934 *End of the Hunt*, had been purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

That same year Nichols was awarded a Carnegie Visiting Professorship at the University of Illinois, Urbana. In the process of selecting Nichols, he was compared to and associated with the three major artists of Regionalism, John Steuart Curry (1897–1946; also represented in this exhibition), Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975), and Grant Wood (1891–1942). The latter Nichols particularly admired and even emulated, and like Wood, he served as the Art Editor for *Encyclopedia Britannica*, starting in 1942. Nichols was also influenced by his friend, painter Maynard Dixon (1875–1946) and by adventurous artist Rockwell Kent (1882–1971).

*Journey Home* can be dated stylistically to around 1948, according to art historian Amanda Mobley Guenther, author of the extensive study *Dale Nichols, Transcending Regionalism*. The image is characteristic of Nichols' approach, with a picturesque, stylized wintry scene anchored by a red barn and featuring a horse-drawn sleigh and snow-laden trees. It is a pleasing, Regionalist image not dissimilar to works by Grant Wood, and it draws from the tradition of Currier and Ives colored lithographs—which also influenced Wood.

Two elements in the image are jarring. One is the sharply-barbed wire in the left and right foreground. Another is the mountain positioned dead center in the background beyond the barn and trees, which is clearly out of place in a Regionalist, Midwest scene. Amanda Mobley Guenther notes that such mountains in Nichols' work can be traced to a Freudian association of landscape with the human form, specifically female. This is a practice encountered in other artists of Nichols' ilk (she cites a Rockwell Kent illustration; and human forms have also been frequently noted in Grant Wood's paintings). This idea as it occurs in Nichols' work was noted by a young artist named Annette Weld who became close with Nichols when he lived in Guatemala during the 1960s and 1970s. Weld described her friend's "conviction that every painting should depict something that could be likened to a woman's breast. He felt this attracted attention and subconsciously made the observer more secure psychologically." – DM

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



B.J.O. Nordfeldt (1878-1955)

***Skating, Anoka*, 1933-1934**

Oil on canvas, 32 x 40 inches

Bror Julius Olsson Nordfeldt was born in Tullstrorp, Sweden, coming with his family to the U.S. in 1891. They settled into the Swedish immigrant community of Chicago, where Nordfeldt studied at the School of the Art Institute from 1898 to 1900. His first of many domestic and international travels and residencies began in 1900 when he moved to Paris, where he enrolled briefly at the Académie Julian, then traveled to England and Sweden. He returned to Chicago in 1903 but in the next decade and a half lived not only there but also in New York City and Provincetown, Massachusetts, plus he had additional periods abroad. During World War I he was in San Francisco supervising the camouflaging of merchant ships for combat.

After the war, Nordfeldt moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico until 1937, when he moved to Lambertville, New Jersey. In this period, he had short-term teaching positions in several locations, including from 1933 to 1934 at the Minneapolis School of Art. It was then that *Skating, Anoka* was painted and that he met art student Emily Abbott, whom he married in 1944.

Nordfeldt, who was impressed by the famed Armory Show of modern European and American art when it showed in Chicago in 1913, is considered more of a modernist artist than many in this exhibition. He was interested especially in the formal qualities of art and noted in a letter to Abbott that he considered the most fundamental aspect of art to be “the abstract form—that is the structure of the idea—bones—not the literal likeness but just the absolute shapes that would give the feeling of the emotional impact...”

The imagery of skaters on a frozen river, with background buildings and a foreground bridge, is quite abstracted and suggests, rather than realistically depicts, the people and their activity. Anoka, about 20 miles northwest of Minneapolis, nestles against the north bank of the Mississippi River and straddles the Rum River that empties into it. The painting appears to be a view from near the city’s railroad bridge (which runs across the Rum River), looking downstream to beyond Anoka’s traffic bridge that carries Pleasant Street.

Although the specific locale can be identified, Nordfeldt was more interested in the emotional and formal impact of his image. He captures the feel of skaters on an overcast winter day, possibly made bleaker by it being during the height of the Great Depression. Nordfeldt made other paintings based on Anoka, and for a time he had a studio there, according to Emily Abbott Nordfeldt, who recorded this painting in a manuscript catalogue, describing it in simple terms: “houses reds, yellows, grays—grasses yellow, bridge reddish brown.” The artist repeated the imagery, with variations, in a lithograph from around 1935 titled *Skating on the Frozen River*, which was part of a series of lithos Nordfeldt created for the Public Works Administration Project (PWAP). – DM

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Gordon Parks (1912–2006)

***Pool Hall, Fort Scott, Kansas***, 1950

Gelatin silver print, 11 ½ x 19 inches

Gordon Parks enjoyed a long career as a photographer, film director, writer, and composer. He most concerned himself with African-Americans, poverty, and civil rights. He got his start in photography in St. Paul, Minnesota, his home for a few years as a teenager, where he made fashion shots for an upscale clothing store.

During World War II, Parks briefly worked for the United States Farm Security Administration (FSA) under its leader Roy Stryker (1893–1975) and then for the Office of War Information. Stryker also hired Parks to work on a large documentary project for the Standard Oil Company. After shooting for *Vogue* for four years, he became the first African-American staff photographer at *Life*, in 1948. There he produced numerous picture stories and made many portraits (boxer Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X, the African-American Muslim leader, were frequent subjects) until 1972, when the magazine ceased publication. In 1960, the American Society of Magazine Photographers named him its photographer of the year. His most well-known movie was *Shaft* (1971), which launched the genre of “Blaxploitation” films. During the 1980 and 1990s, Parks’ work became more reflective, taking the form of memoirs, poems, novels, and musical scores. The Gordon Parks Museum, with collections of his work, is located in his birth town of Fort Scott, Kansas.

In 1950, Parks undertook an early story on racial segregation for *Life*, mining his own memories and experiences by working in his home town, Fort Scott. He had left there 20 years earlier, as a teenager, after his mother died and he needed to find his place in the world. The proposed photo essay, with both text and pictures by Parks, was titled *Back to Fort Scott*, but it never ended up appearing in the magazine. Parks wrote about graduating from grade school with a dozen other black children: “Our emotions were intermingled with sadness and gaiety. None of us understood why the first years of our education were separated from those of the whites, nor did we bother to ask. The situation existed when we were born. We waded in normal at the tender age of six and swam out maladjusted nine years later.”

In Fort Scott, Parks photographed the train station, a ball park in which he had played, and people on the street, such as these men spilling out of a local pool hall. They pose casually, apparently taking a break between games, one of them with his dog, which turns its head to regard the photographer. Nicely altering the static, frontal approach that Parks took in the image is the slanting sidewalk underfoot, suggesting that the entire state of Kansas is not as flat as a pancake. – CAP



## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Philip Pinner (1910–1977)

***Roof Tops***, 1932

Oil on canvas, 24 x 17 inches

Philip Pinner was born in San Francisco and spent the bulk of his career on the west coast. He studied at the California School of Fine Art and the Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design, both in San Francisco, and at the Art Center School in Los Angeles. He was a painter in both oil and watercolor, and also worked as a designer and a lithographer. Pinner studied with painter Maynard Dixon (1875–1946) and with industrial designer Joseph Sinel (1889–1975). He was involved in camouflage painting in the World War II era. Pinner had an active exhibition career from the early 1930s until the 1950s. He was heavily involved in the art scene of his home town, including the San Francisco Art Association. His work is in a number of California collections, including the San Francisco Museum of Art.

When Pinner studied with Maynard Dixon in the early 1930s, Dixon's art had evolved through the tumultuous years of Modernism's onset. The influence of Modernism can be seen in Pinner's *Roof Tops* of 1932. Its stark lines and lack of people looks very modernistic, similar to what, for instance, Precisionist artist George Copeland Ault (1891–1948) would have painted, and it was likely influenced by Joseph Sinel and his industrial designs.

The central smokestack and architectural elements of *Roof Tops* have been reduced nearly to geometrical purity and even flatness, with some elements of depth and dynamism introduced through a handful of rounded, modeled forms—such as the smokestack and the tanks beyond it—and through a handful of diagonals like in the lower right and left corners or in the orangish awnings on the yellowish building at middle left. This reduction of forms to patterned simplicity can be seen taken further by Pinner in a 1944 oil painting titled *Equalateral Variations* that features a number of colorful and flat triangles and circles set against a yellow background. – DS

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Earl Rowland (1890–1963)

***Smelters*, 1934**

Oil on canvas, 25 x 30 inches

Earl Rowland was born in Trinidad, Colorado in 1890 and headed to the big city of Chicago to study art at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1910 under Dudley Crafts Watson (1885–1972). From there, he headed west to study at the School of Industrial Arts in Los Angeles. He was soon swept up in World War I, serving in the Army. After his discharge, he returned to Los Angeles and immersed himself in the art scene. In 1930, he moved north to Stockton, in central California, to take a position teaching art at the College of the Pacific. In 1937, he became director of Stockton's Pioneer and Haggin Art Gallery (today the Haggin Museum). Rowland held that position, while continuing to teach and paint, until his death in 1963.

In the 1920s, the American steel industry was the backbone of the country. In 1929, output was at its peak, but by 1932 it had dropped by more than 90 percent. Industry leader U.S. Steel's payroll of full-time workers fell from 225,000 in 1929 to zero on April 1, 1933. Rowland painted *Smelters* in 1934, a year in which the industry had made a partial recovery but was still operating at less than 50 percent capacity (it would not make a complete comeback until the threat of World War II). Perhaps in this painting Rowland was hoping the industry would recover fully to past levels, or maybe he was remembering the past. Either way, he emphasized the crucible of molten steel by placing it centrally in the image. The workers hovering below seem small, and not really in control, contributing to the extreme dynamism of this painting. – DS

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Arthur Rothstein (1915–1985)

***Coal Miners, Birmingham, Alabama, 1937***

Gelatin silver print, 8  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 5  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches

After growing up in New York, Arthur Rothstein excelled as a photojournalist for nearly a half century, beginning in 1935. Roy Stryker (1893–1975), his former teacher, hired him right out of college (Columbia University) to photograph for the United States Resettlement Administration. Rothstein later claimed that his government work took him to every county in the nation. Working in Oklahoma in 1936, he captured an image of people caught in a dust storm (*Dust Storm, Cimarron County, Oklahoma*), which would become one of the iconic images of the Depression Era.

During World War II Rothstein photographed for the Army Signal Corps in the Asian theater, and in China for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. In 1946, he began what would be a 25-year stint as the director of photography for *Look* magazine. His last position was as an editor at *Parade*, a widely circulated national Sunday-newspaper supplement. Rothstein also wrote about 10 books on documentary photography, plus many columns for the periodicals *U.S. Camera* and *Modern Photography*. He received numerous awards for his work and was a founding member of the American Society of Magazine Photographers.

In February 1937, Rothstein photographed for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in Alabama. In Birmingham, he shot nearly an entire roll of 35mm film of coal miners; the negatives are currently held by the Library of Congress, including the one for this image. He photographed the miners lined up, as they were changing their shift, and judging from their dirty faces, they had just come out of the mine. Each of them has items essential to their work: heavy and dark clothing, a hard hat, a light and its battery pack, and a (now empty) lunch pail. After eight or more hours underground, the miners undoubtedly emerged squinting in the bright sunlight and here they shade their eyes with the brims of their hats. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Arthur Rothstein (1915–1985)

***Dust Storm, Cimarron County, Oklahoma, 1936***

Gelatin silver print (printed early 1940s), 8 ¾ x 12 ¾ inches

In 1936, the 20-year-old Rothstein traveled to the panhandle of Oklahoma to document the devastation in the so called “Dust Bowl,” where windstorms were sweeping away tons of topsoil, burying farmhouses, and killing livestock. Years later, he recalled: “As I was saying goodbye to one of the few remaining farmers, we found ourselves faced with the onslaught of another terrible dust storm. I ran for my car. The farmer and his two boys ran for the safety of their home. I turned back and squinted through the dense swirling cloud of dust and sand. It was at that decisive moment that I clicked the shutter. I had captured my most famous and historically important photograph. Later I realized that this family’s courage and perseverance characterized what I’ve always felt was our great American spirit: to overcome adversity and to keep fighting for a better life.”

The rippling of the figures’ clothes and the gray blurriness evoke a raging tempest. So do the postures of the man and boys: they lean into the fierce wind as they struggle toward their humble shelter. Sadly, the family’s wooden hut seems to offer little potential protection from the storm, as it is already partially buried. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Arthur Rothstein (1915–1985)

***“Oregon or Bust,” Vernon Evans, Missoula, Montana, 1936***

Gelatin silver print (printed later), 11 x 14 inches

Thousands of unemployed individuals and families left the drought-stricken Midwest for the West Coast during the Great Depression, hoping to find jobs and better living conditions. Among them was Vernon Evans, a young farm hand from South Dakota, pictured here with his Ford Model T and some meager possessions strapped to the back fender, including a roll of barbed wire.

In fact, Evans was traveling with four others, most of whom appear in variant negatives of this image. Years later, Evans recounted that things were so bad in South Dakota, that “you couldn’t even *buy* a job.” When the five left, they had \$54 among them and when they arrived in Oregon they were down to a mere \$16. But luckily Evans landed work with a railroad almost immediately and he stayed in Oregon for more than five years. “Oregon or Bust” was the kind of rallying cry that those immigrating within America’s borders liked to use and scrawl on signs or on their vehicles. Evans’ gesture of leaning on the car could be seen as a metaphor for his dependence on the contraption to get him to a new, more hospitable place. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



William S. Schwartz (1896–1977)

***Main Street, Galena***, c.1938

Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches

William S. Schwartz, born in Smorgon, Russia, was 17 when he arrived in the U.S., but he had already been an honor student for four years at the Vilnius Art School (in present-day Lithuania), where he had studied with Ivan Trutnev (1827–1912). He initially lived for several months with a sister in New York City, then later moved to live with a brother in Omaha. He settled in Chicago, where in 1917 he completed his art studies at the School of the Chicago Institute of Art. Schwartz was associated with Chicago for the remainder of his life and became friends with other artists there, among them Aaron Bohrod (1907–1992; also represented in this exhibition).

Schwartz was also accomplished in music. In the early years of his career, the trained tenor was able to partially support himself through his favorably-reviewed singing, including with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. But he considered painting to be his primary calling, while noting that music had unquestionably influenced his art practice. This can most explicitly be recognized in his 1932 series of paintings with the shared titles *Symphonic Forms*, works that feature modernistic, highly-abstracted landscape imagery. The general formal rhythm of *Main Street, Galena*, along with its vibrant harmonies of colors, also connects to the musical, while its fractured and distorted forms relate to Cubism, another Modernist ideal that affected his work.

Schwartz became increasingly interested in portraying the American Scene starting in the 1930s, and in a retrospective article from 1970 noted how one of his most important discoveries regarding America was “the astonishing beauty and vitality of the American scene,” noting further the “variety of the American landscape” and the “richness of American coloration.”

Among the many places across the U.S. he depicted was the river town of Galena, in the northwest corner of Illinois. Schwartz spent time there in 1938 making a number of works depicting the town, which appealed to him because of the unusual nature of the landscape and the town. Galena was then, as it is today, a quaint and charming town that embraces its historical past including when it was the most important Mississippi riverboat stop between St. Louis and Minneapolis/St. Paul. Schwartz has depicted the town’s curving, historically-preserved Main Street, which reflects the back and forth curves of the Galena River, a short tributary from the Mississippi. In the past several decades, flooding of the Mississippi and Galena Rivers has become an increasingly-frequent problem for the city.

There is an ominous quality to *Main Street, Galena*, heightened by the formal distortions and the dramatic coloration of the sky, and also by the forlorn aspect of the man in the right foreground, who is watched suspiciously by the shop owner up the street sweeping the sidewalk and the two women across the street. The hunched man is likely a self-portrait, since his features resemble those of Schwartz in a photo that accompanied the article he wrote in 1970. – DM

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Zoltan Sepeshy (1898–1974)

***Railroad Station*, 1935**

Oil on board, 16 x 20 inches

Zoltan Sepeshy was born in Kassa, Hungary to an aristocratic family and he was able to study at both the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest and at Vienna's Fine Arts Academy, as well as travel with his father to a variety of European countries. At his father's suggestion, he left for the United States in 1921 and after a short time in New York settled in Detroit where his uncle lived.

The artist described this early period as a "Horatio Alger story in reverse," because of his having gone from a privileged life to one in which he struggled to earn his living. While working various odd jobs, he painted a great deal and exhibited in the Detroit area. He noted that instead of portraying "manicured scenery," he instead painted such things as "railroad bridges, factories, miners, grimy city scenes," and so forth. Sepeshy had early teaching positions in Detroit and in 1930 began his long association with the Cranbrook Academy of Art, in Bloomfield Hills not too far outside of Detroit, which came about through his friendship with the Academy's first leader, Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen (1873–1950). After serving initially as a painting instructor, Sepeshy soon became the head of Cranbrook's painting department. In 1947, he became the Academy's director, and from 1959 until his retirement in 1966 served as its president.

The artist's work, which he saw as an "interplay of concrete and abstract," often had a Modernist quality that can be related to Cubism, and the influence of the modern machine ideal of Futurism can also be detected. Sepeshy viewed the U.S. as a place where "the foundations of a new creative art" were being laid, and critics noted, as in an essay for his second solo exhibition in New York City (held at Marie Sterner Galleries in 1936), his efforts to "penetrate the character of his adopted land." *New York Times* art critic Edward Alden Jewell, who met Sepeshy during a visit to Michigan to interview Saarinen, covered the 1936 exhibit. Among the few works specifically mentioned he cited two, *Scranton Coal Chute* and *Great Lakes Harbor*, that considered industrial subjects similar to the Shogren-Meyer *Railroad Station* painting of that same period.

*Railroad Station*, although apparently inspired to some degree by the train station in Hamburg, Germany, during the artist's travels abroad around this time (according to a label on its reverse), captures the industrial vitality that had burgeoned in the U.S. prior to the Great Depression but then was hampered severely by it. The image is built up with dark and neutral tones punctuated by the blue sky, the red background buildings, and the yellow train. The forms, including the nearly-abstract curving shapes in the foreground that imply motion and speed, are a mix of flat planes and modeled three-dimensional solids, the "concrete and abstract" combination that characterized Sepeshy's work of this time. – DM

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Arthur Siegel (1913–1978)

***Right of Assembly***, 1939

Gelatin silver print, 4 x 5 inches

Residing variously in Detroit and Chicago, Arthur Siegel worked successfully as both a creative and commercial photographer. He became particularly known for his abstract photograms (images on photographic paper made without a camera) and his straightforward documentary pictures. In 1936 Siegel received his bachelor's degree from Detroit's Wayne State University and then briefly taught photography there. He first moved to Chicago in 1937, on a scholarship to study with László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), the great modernist and head of the New Bauhaus school.

In the late 1930s, Siegel returned to Detroit, where he produced commercial, journalistic, and color photographs, and also worked freelance for such national periodicals as *Collier's*, *Fortune*, and *Life*. During World War II, he was employed by several government agencies, including the Farm Security Administration (FSA), the Office of War Information, and the U.S. Army Air Corps. The New Bauhaus was rechristened the Institute of Design in 1946, as part of the Illinois Institute of Technology, and Siegel became the head of its new department of photography. There he pioneered a series of courses titled "New Visions in Photography," which integrated experimental techniques with artistic intent. At the Institute, Siegel served as a professor of photography, from 1951 to 1954, from 1963 to 1964, and from 1967 to 1978.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s there was much friction between American automobile makers and their workers. At this time, Siegel lived in Detroit, where most of this unrest occurred, so he documented some of the demonstrations and rallies. This one may have taken place in Cadillac Square, an open area in downtown Detroit, and probably involved members of the United Auto Workers and Congress of Industrial Organizations (UAW-CIO). Those in the crowd, which virtually fills the frame, are looking towards the center of the image, where an individual is speaking from the top of a car. Directly to his left a movie camera records him, as he is surrounded by flags and hand-held signs (one of which reads "Buy Union"). Numerous loud speakers project the speech to the crowd and a band of horn instruments (located to the far right) provides music. Siegel used an elevated camera position, undoubtedly some building along the square's edge, to give an indication of the large size of the gathering. By allowing little open space in the picture, he emphasized crowding and presented miniscule figures in a sea of humanity.

Siegel made a number of similar images, but it is not known if they all were of the same rally. By far the best known of them is a vertical image, with people (and no signs) completely filling the frame. He seems to have titled all of these variants the same, as *Right of Assembly*. This of course refers to the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, which provides for "the right of the people peaceably to assemble." Given the notation "only print" on the back, this could be a unique print, and it is a contact print, measuring only 4 x 5 inches. - CAP



## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Gerrit V. Sinclair (1890–1955)

***Corner Grocery Store, Minneapolis, 1945***

Oil on masonite, 16 x 20 inches

Gerrit V. Sinclair was born in Grand Haven, Michigan, and in 1896 moved with his family to Chicago where after high school he studied at the School of the Art Institute, from 1910 to 1915. Sinclair's excellence as a student led to him being awarded the Art Institute's highest award, the John Quincy Adams Traveling Scholarship. During World War I, he served in the U.S. Army Ambulance Corps in northern Italy, and as part of his time abroad he was able to see old master paintings by many artists, absorbing from them lessons about perspective, color, and the creation of form and space.

His influential teaching career began in 1920 when he was a replacement teacher for a semester at the Minneapolis School of Art, then later that year became the first instructor at Milwaukee's newly-formed Layton School of Art, where he taught until 1954. During the Depression Era, Sinclair participated in federal art programs, including by painting murals, among them two for the post office in Wausau (*Lumbering and Rural Mail*, finished in 1940).

Sinclair's work is generally realistic, with a certain impressionist quality, but it is based on a deep appreciation of the formal, abstract qualities of art. In 1913, the artist saw the famed Armory Show when it appeared in Chicago and he noted that experiencing the modernist works highlighted in that exhibit broadened his ideas of what was possible in art. He became keenly aware of the architectonic structure of paintings, something he emphasized in his own teaching. In his subject matter, he generally considered the quotidian, and was termed a "Walden of Wisconsin" in a *New York Times* review of his 1947 exhibition at Milch Galleries. He avoided social commentary, as in this image of a small grocery store in Minneapolis, which is similar to the many paintings he did of his home state just across the border. Sinclair visited Minnesota and participated in exhibitions at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

*Corner Grocery Store, Minneapolis* is a pleasingly-organized composition with a contrast of deep space in the receding sidewalk on the left side, and the red, poster-covered façade at the center and right, which presses forward toward the foreground picture plane. It appears to be a pleasant summer day, with people strolling on the street and sidewalks, some of them in short sleeves and one man wearing a straw hat to protect from the sun. The Coca-Cola advertisement in the center suggests the warmth of the day, and the yellow Wild West Show poster promises upcoming evening entertainment.

Sinclair's method in a painting such as this was to work from memory in his studio, often aided by sketches done on site. He drew outside frequently, and noted about his practice that "The sketching I do is mostly for analysis for the possibilities of color or value pattern that I can later organize." – DM

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Clyde Singer (1908–1991)

***Ohio State Fair***, c.1930

Oil on canvas, 18 x 20 inches

Clyde Singer was born in Malvern, Ohio. He first studied art at the Columbus (Ohio) Art School from 1931 to 1932. As a student, he greatly admired the paintings of famed American master George Bellows (1882–1925). He continued his training at the Art Students League in New York from 1933 to 1934 where he was taught by several important American painters, including Kenneth Hayes Miller (1876–1952), Alexander Brook (1898–1980), Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975), and John Steuart Curry (1897–1946, also represented in this exhibition).

Completing his New York studies in 1934, Singer returned to Malvern to set up a studio. His work from the late 1930s and early 1940s is decidedly Regionalist in style, incorporating New York and Ohio subjects and addressing both rural and urban themes. In 1940, Singer accepted a position as assistant director at the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio. He relocated his studio and continued to paint in the realist tradition of the American Scene. In 1941, he completed a commissioned mural titled *Skaters* for the post office in New Concord, Ohio. Singer's work has been included in more than 50 major exhibitions, including the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco and the 1945 Arts for Victory Exhibition at Rockefeller Center in New York. The artist remained active as a painter and curator into the early 1990s, until his death in Youngstown, Ohio in 1991.

The state fair was one of the only bright spots in the middle of the Great Depression in the 1930s. People could escape the stress in their lives for a brief time and forget all their problems at the state fair. Rural areas especially welcomed a travelling fair because farm country was some of the hardest hit areas during the Depression. Everybody could go to the fair. This was a place the family could visit together and enjoy some entertainment. Singer depicts common people strolling around and having a good time. – DS

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



W. Eugene Smith (1918–1978)  
***Shipyard Dock Workers***, c.1940s  
Gelatin silver print, 13 ½ x 9 ½ inches

Many consider W. Eugene Smith to be the most important American photojournalist of the 20th century. His first published photographs appeared in his hometown newspaper in Wichita, Kansas, when he was still a teenager. In 1937 he moved to New York, where he began working for *Newsweek* and a few years later for *Life* magazine. During World War II, Smith photographed many of the major Asian battles and was seriously wounded. He produced many significant photographic essays for *Life* in the late 1940s and 1950s. However, he frequently quarreled with the magazine's editors over the cropping and layout of his pictures and quit more than once before permanently leaving in 1954, after the appearance of his story on Dr. Albert Schweitzer.

In 1955 historian Stefan Loran commissioned Smith to supply photographs for a chapter in an upcoming book to celebrate the bicentennial of Pittsburgh. While Smith completed the assignment, he became obsessed with capturing the essence of this idiosyncratic three-river city—its industry, culture, architecture, terrain, and people. Wishing to publish a book on Pittsburgh, Smith worked for more than two years with up to 2,000 prints, constantly editing and reordering them, but he never found a publisher. Subsequently, he photographed jazz musicians for record covers. Late in life, he worked in Japan, making pictures that revealed the devastating effect of industrial pollution on the inhabitants of the city of Minamata; the results of this undertaking were published in an impressive book in 1975.

Here, the great photojournalist perched himself above the entrance/exit of a dock at the time that workers were leaving their shift. The mass of humanity he captured appears to comprise only men, wearing both hard and soft hats, some of whom noticed the photographer and looked up at him. Smith tilted his camera slightly, to add visual dynamism, and positioned it to show the tightly packed crowd bursting through the gateway and turning to the left.

The location of this scene is unknown, but it was likely on either the east or west coast of the United States, where the country was building ships for World War II. Smith is known to have photographed the shipyards at Baltimore. In any case, he produced a glimpse of the power of the American working class at the middle of the 20th century. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Jack Keijo Steele (1919–2003)

*The Sweeper*, 1940–1945

Oil on masonite, 35 x 26 inches

Jack Keijo Steele, of Finnish descent, was born in the northern Michigan town of Ironwood and moved to a working-class neighborhood of Detroit as a child. After high school, he worked as a laborer in Detroit. In 1940, he enrolled at Cranbrook Academy of Art, in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, not far from Detroit, and studied under Zoltan Sepeshy (1898–1974; also represented in this exhibition). World War II interrupted his studies and he enlisted and became a war artist. After the war, he finished his studies at Cranbrook then went to work at the Ford Motor Company. He would work there for his entire career, retiring in 1980, and would paint during his spare time. His artistic approach, of social and urban realism, recorded the experiences of his life. Steele's work was rediscovered in 1992 and brought back to light after having been neglected.

Steele's painting *The Sweeper* portrays total emptiness—except for the lone person standing on the street and leaning on a broom. That person's clothing looks loose and worn, and he seems tired. His surroundings look bleak and dark, and the buildings tower over him menacingly. Perhaps this is Steele's message of an industrialized society where not everyone succeeds. Perhaps the artist is looking ahead to the demise of inner cities and the flight to the suburbs. By the time Steele retired in 1980, the automotive industry was in transition, with factories hiring less people and working out of the inner city of Detroit, resulting once again in difficult times for the working urban class. – SM

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Paul Strand (1890–1976)

***Wall Street, New York, 1915***

Platinum-palladium print (printed 1984), 10 1/8 x 12 3/4 inches

A trusted associate of Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), Paul Strand pursued creative photography for his whole adult life, working with many subjects and in numerous countries. He first studied photography in 1908 with Lewis W. Hine (1874–1940; also represented in this exhibit) at the Ethical Culture School in New York. After being exposed to modern art at Stieglitz's gallery "291," he began to make some of the earliest abstract photographs, using household objects. Some of these images were featured in the last two issues of the deluxe periodical *Camera Work* in 1916–1917, signaling the end of the first movement of artistic photography—pictorialism.

Strand worked as a freelance cinematographer during the 1920s and 1930s. Noteworthy was his first effort, *Manhatta* (1921), a silent film which was comprised of snippets of everyday life in New York City and which was made with the painter Charles Sheeler (1883–1965). In 1940, Strand issued a portfolio titled *Photographs of Mexico*, containing 20 sensitive photogravure prints of the country's people and religious icons. Strand moved to Europe in 1950 to escape America's conservative political climate and lived most of his remaining years in a small French village. He continued to produce books, which he filled with images of people native to France, Spain, Scotland, Egypt, and Ghana.

This is one of Strand's earliest and most famous images, comprising small figures walking below massive window wells. It was obviously made early or late in the work day, as the low sun created long shadows on the sidewalk and deep ones in the windows. All the people seem to be walking in the same direction and all appear to be men, wearing hats. Strand presents a great contrast between everyday, human activity and the rigid architecture of the newly constructed (1913) J. P. Morgan Building (known as the "House of Morgan"), in the heart of New York's financial district. This image helped signal the beginning of modernism, abstraction, and interest in the "machine aesthetic" in the field of creative photography.

Only a few vintage prints are known of this important image. But it received much attention when it appeared as a rich photogravure in the October 1916 issue of Stieglitz's leading periodical *Camera Work*. Up to this point most of the images in the magazine utilized soft-focus, painterly effects. This and other pictures by Strand signaled Stieglitz's own turning away from the movement of pictorial photography and his embrace of more straight, sharply focused work. Writing in *Camera Work* about Strand's photographs, Stieglitz declared, "The work is brutally direct. Devoid of all flim-flam; devoid of trickery and of any "ism;" devoid of any attempt to mystify an ignorant public, including the photographers themselves. These photographs are the direct expression of today." – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Doris Ulmann (1882-1934)

*Farm Worker*, c.1925

Platinum print, 8 x 6 inches

Doris Ulmann photographed from the 1910s until her early death (at only 52 years), concentrating on portrait work. Her images of both well-known Americans and rural southern blacks were published in numerous books during her lifetime. Born into an affluent New York family, she studied teacher training at the Ethical Culture School in New York as well as psychology and law at Columbia University, also in New York. Around 1910, Ulmann took photography classes from Clarence H. White (1871-1925), and she went by the name Doris Jaeger from 1915 to 1925, when she was married. She became a member of the Pictorial Photographers of America, who included reproductions of her work in four of its annuals during the 1920s.

Ulmann devoted herself to professional photography in 1918, when she began making softly-focused portraits in her living room of famous individuals in literature and the arts. Within the next decade, three deluxe, gravure-printed books of her portraits appeared, picturing the faculty of physicians and surgeons of Columbia University, the medical faculty of Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, Maryland), and American literary editors. In about 1925, she commenced photographing rural folk along the East Coast. Initially, she worked in New England, concentrating on the Amish, Mennonite, and Shaker communities. After 1927 she traveled with folklorist John Jacob Niles to remote areas of the Appalachian Mountains, producing her best-known work there over the next several years. She also made portraits of the black residents of a South Carolina plantation; these were used to illustrate Julia Peterkin's 1933 book *Roll, Jordan, Roll*.

Despite being white, wealthy, and a New Yorker, Ulmann immersed herself in black rural culture of the Deep South. She photographed many farmers going about their daily chores, such as this woman who was probably weeding a field in preparation for planting. She is simply dressed, in an edgeworn hat and a piece of rope serving as her belt. The next victim to her hoe is undoubtedly the unwanted plant at her feet, and others can be seen in the distance. The likely future crop in the field is cotton, the South's staple.

The body of work from which this image comes was part of the American movement of naturalistic photography. Inspired by the Englishman Peter Henry Emerson (1856-1936; a distant cousin of the American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson), naturalistic photographers essayed rural subjects and used Emerson's technique of differential focusing. This involved presenting only the main subject of the photograph in focus and letting other areas fall into softness. Here, Ulmann rendered the worker relatively sharply and the trees and field in the distance in muted tones. By placing the figure off center and eliminating unnecessary subject matter, she also embraced tenets of *Japonism*, a contemporary philosophy of picture making. - CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



John Vachon (1914–1975)

***Railroad Crossing, McHenry County, North Dakota, 1940***

Gelatin silver print, 6 5/8 x 9 1/2 inches

A shy Minnesotan, John Vachon grew up in St. Paul, and made his name working for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) during the 1930s. He used his camera to examine various social aspects of American culture. After graduating in 1934 from what is now the University of St. Thomas, he briefly attended graduate school in Washington, D.C., on a scholarship.

Soon, however, he was working a low-level job at the FSA, where he was promoted and eventually sent with a camera on assignment to Omaha in 1938. He was designated a junior photographer in 1940 and continued at the renamed Office of War Information a few years later. In 1943, when Roy Stryker (1893-1975), the head of the FSA, relocated to Standard Oil, Vachon went with him to work on a sizeable documentary project for the company. He served briefly in the American military near the end of World War II, but was not sent overseas. In 1947, Vachon started as a staff photographer at *Look*, the popular weekly magazine similar to *Life*. He was employed there for over two decades, until 1971. Subsequently, he produced photo stories for *Vermont Life*, which happened to be edited by one of his sons. His daughter, Christine, made a name for herself as an independent filmmaker.

The Library of Congress owns over 400 negatives by Vachon made in North Dakota alone, including this one. Since the state is so rural, the photographer spent the vast majority of his time out on the plains, on farms, and in small towns.

Here, Vachon pulled his car to the side of a dirt road to photograph the vastness of North Dakota's sky and landscape. Under a blanket of clouds and a dark horizon, possibly signaling an approaching fall thunderstorm, he presents railroad tracks, a singular telephone pole, and a simple wooden railroad crossing sign. Rather than an automatic crossing signal, with lights and a descending bar, this location warranted only a utilitarian, hand-painted sign, with the first and last letters of "crossing" rather clumsily situated on the overlapping pieces of timber. Shaped liked an upturned arrow, the sign points heavenly and mimics the vertical thrust of the pole directly behind it. - CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Joseph Paul Vorst (1897–1947)

### ***Sharecroppers' Revolt*, 1939**

Oil on panel, 24 x 30 inches

Joseph Paul Vorst was born in Essen, Germany. He studied under Max Liebermann (1847–1935) in Berlin who was highly influenced by French Impressionism. Vorst traveled to Barbizon in France near the Forest of Fontainebleau to experience paintings by French painters like Édouard Manet (1832–1883). He served as a soldier in the German army in World War I. While still in Germany, he converted to Mormonism in the early 1920s. This, along with the rise of Nazism, probably contributed to his decision to immigrate to the United States. He moved to Missouri where there were some distant family members and he became involved in the art scene of the 1930s. He joined the American Artists' Congress and met other painters in the area like Joe Jones (1926–2005; also represented in this exhibition). He also got to know Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975) from teaching art in St. Genevieve, Missouri. In 1936, he started a multiple year exhibition schedule at the Art Institute of Chicago. These exhibits led to others, including at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and exhibiting at the 1939 New York World's Fair. Through involvement with the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Vorst also won mural commissions for post offices in Missouri. The themes of his paintings were strongly influenced by his interest in social realism, and he regularly considered in his art the under privileged and those people who the Depression hit hardest.

In Missouri in January 1939, approximately 1,500 sharecroppers, mostly African-Americans, protested their eviction from the farmland on which they lived and worked. Landowners had evicted them after the government ruled that they, as tenant sharecroppers, were entitled to a portion of federal farm subsidies. In order to keep the full subsidies for themselves, the owners decided to kick their tenants off the land and hire day laborers to harvest their crops. The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union organized the Revolt in response, and for more than 100 miles, protestors, mostly African-American, set up shanties along Highways 60 and 61 in southeastern Missouri, huddling around campfires. In freezing temperatures, they silently and peacefully protested for five days. *Sharecroppers' Revolt* was one of Vorst's responses to this protest. It is the kind of painting that the artist returned to again and again throughout his career—a documentary picture advocating against social inequality—in support of the underprivileged and downtrodden. – DS



## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Todd Webb (1905–2000)

***Fulton Street El Station, New York, 1948***

Gelatin silver print, 6 7/8 x 5 inches

Born Charles Clayton Webb III, he originally worked as a stockbroker and gold prospector, and began photographing while living in Detroit in the late 1930s. There, while working for the Chrysler automobile company, he joined the city's camera club, became friends with Harry Callahan (1912–1999), and took a class with Ansel Adams (1902–1984). During World War II Webb was a photographer in the United States Navy, stationed in the South Pacific.

After being discharged from the service, Webb settled in New York, where he photographed for the Standard Oil Company and *Fortune* magazine. During the 1940s and 1950s, his personal work comprised mostly street scenes and pedestrians in New York and Paris, where he lived for a while. His most famous image is a 1948, seven-foot panorama (comprising eight prints made with a large-format camera) depicting a full block of storefronts on New York's Sixth Avenue. Webb had his first one-person exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York in 1946, and in 1955 secured a Guggenheim grant to photograph pioneer trails of the American West. He resided in New Mexico during the 1960s, when his primary subject was the painter Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986). In 2006, the Nelson-Atkins Museum, in Kansas City, Missouri, acquired a large group of Webb's prints, presented an exhibition, and published a major monograph on him.

Webb was drawn to the Fulton Street train station in 1948, because that was the year it opened in lower Manhattan. Today, the station is a complex, with four lines going through it. Webb situated himself at the end of the open-air platform and pointed his camera south to make this image of a train departing the station and about to disappear around a bend in the tracks. New Art Deco skyscrapers line most of this image, yet a stand of much shorter apartment buildings remain, in the center of the image. The picture attests to the rapid, upward construction in New York at the time, along with the vital transportation system of the combined elevated ("El") and underground subway trains. Webb made a companion photograph to this one, where a train is approaching the station, on the opposite track and in a nearly identical position, making it difficult to notice the difference between the two images. - CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Elof Wedin (1901–1983)

***Koppers Coke Plant***, c.1940

Oil on canvas, 22 x 27 inches

Elof Wedin was born in Härmösand, Angermanland, in east central Sweden, and immigrated to America in early adulthood, at age 19. After a short initial period in Chicago, he settled in Minneapolis and studied at the Minneapolis School of Art for three-and-a-half years starting in the fall of 1921. Later, in 1926, he studied for a few months at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, returning afterward to Minnesota. Wedin never made his living completely from his art but worked full time for many years as a pipe fitter, painting evenings and weekends. The image of a laborer by day who painted at night caught on and was noted in a 1939 review in *ARTnews* titled “American Boiler-worker Builds Well Upon Cézanne.”

Wedin had two solo shows in New York, in 1936 and again in 1939, both at the short-lived Hudson Walker Gallery and both praised in the *New York Times*. The artist managed to remain employed through the Great Depression and noted that he was better off financially than many other artists. He participated in New Deal art programs, including mural projects through the Treasury Department for post offices in Litchfield, Minnesota and Mobridge, South Dakota, and earlier for the short-lived Public Works of Art Program (PWAP) of 1933–1934. His two PWAP projects included documenting work at a Civilian Conservation Corps camp in Itasca State Park in northern Minnesota and participating in a project of creating landscapes and cityscapes in and around the campus of the University of Minnesota (for which project artist Cameron Booth (1892–1980), also represented in this exhibition, was a supervisor).

*Koppers Coke Plant*, believed to date from around 1940, is similar in subject matter to the PWAP works done for the University, although its style is more faceted and fragmented than those works, reflecting Wedin’s particular and ongoing interest in the proto-Cubist approach of French artist Paul Cézanne (1839–1906). The industrial coke plant depicted in Wedin’s image was located on Hamline Avenue not far from the University. It was in operation from 1917 to 1979 and produced “coke,” a solid fuel derived from coal and used in making steel. The site was acquired for reuse and is now occupied by office and light industrial buildings but is monitored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a “Superfund Site” because of hazardous chemicals from the plant’s waste disposal having contaminated the soil and groundwater.

*Koppers Coke Plant* was earlier owned by Richard L. Hillstrom, namesake of the Hillstrom Museum of Art, who purchased it in 1977 directly from Wedin. Hillstrom and the artist were friends and Hillstrom not only supported the artist through purchase of many of his works over the years but also was responsible for mounting a 50-year retrospective exhibition in 1979. Hillstrom eulogized Wedin when he died in 1983 from his many years of exposure to asbestos, noting Wedin’s enormous output and his complete dedication to his art. – DM

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Marion Post Wolcott (1910–1990)

***Bennie's Grocery, Sylvania, Georgia, 1939***

Gelatin silver print, 11 x 14 inches

Marion Post Wolcott is revered for her straightforward photographs made during the Great Depression in the American South, while she was working for the government's Farm Security Administration (FSA). She was first exposed to class inequities in the early 1930s, while teaching elementary school in Massachusetts and attending the New School for Social Research in New York. She also studied in Austria and was alarmed by the popularity of Adolf Hitler in neighboring Germany.

Back in New York, she began as a freelance photographer, for *Fortune* and the Associated Press, and landed a job with the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*. She was mentored by fellow photographer Ralph Steiner (1899–1986), who in 1938 helped her get hired by the FSA. Initially working in Georgia, and North and South Carolina, she wrote to Roy Stryker (1893–1975), the agency's head, that "Driving at night is definitely not a good idea for a gal alone in the South. And you know I'm no sissy." After a few years in that region of the country, Wolcott spent much of 1941 photographing in the Midwest, Plains, and American West. Early the next year, she resigned from government work and settled on a farm in Virginia. In the mid and late 1950s, she lived in New Mexico, taught school, and traveled with her Foreign Service husband, Lee Wolcott, to India, Egypt, Iran, and Pakistan. During the 1970s, Wolcott took up color work and became a part of the photographic community in San Francisco.

This image of a black corner shop, similar to many pictures by fellow FSA photographer Walker Evans (1903–1975; also represented in this exhibition), delights in vernacular architecture and hand-painted signage. The clapboard structure was undoubtedly located in the black section of this small town in east central Georgia, a distance from its all-white Main Street. Among the products offered by Bennie's were fish, lard, flour, syrup, salt, grits, and it even had a Gulf gasoline pump at curbside. Wolcott posed a black boy (perhaps a store worker) casually outside and waited for an adult to curiously peer out of the partially opened front door.

Wolcott made at least two exposures of this subject in June 1939, as these negatives are part of the FSA collection at the Library of Congress. Her other image shows the opposite side of the store (to the right), also framed frontally, but it is less memorable, due to the lack of the well-placed human figures that are seen here. – CAP

## INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA



Marion Post Wolcott (1910–1990)

***Coal Miner's Child Carrying Home a Can of Kerosene, Scotts Run, West Virginia, 1938***

Gelatin silver print (printed 1983), 11 x 14 inches

Wolcott was obviously intrigued by the close proximity of the clapboard houses to the railroad tracks here. Scotts Run is not a town, but instead is a geographical region in northeastern West Virginia that includes about a dozen unincorporated communities. Placing her camera to give equal weight to the buildings and the railroad cars, she waited for a girl to enter the frame, for human interest. The child's somewhat contorted posture suggests that the can was full and was a heavy load for her.

The New York Central railroad cars lining one side of the image are filled to capacity and they run by what is likely a coal loading facility in the distance. Individual home owners did not choose this site to build on—it was the coal company that did, in order to rent to its miners. This place was so symbolic of the poor conditions of the country's Great Depression, that it was also photographed a few years earlier by Walker Evans (1903–1975; also represented in this exhibition). Evans' photograph, though framed differently, includes all the same elements, except for a person. – CAP

## American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Louis Wolchonok (1898–1973)

***Bridge Painter***, c.1939

Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches

Louis Wolchonok studied at the National Academy of Design, the Cooper Union Art School, City College of New York, and the Brooklyn Academy of Fine Art, all in New York, and also at the Académie Julian in Paris. He was a social realist painter, and was a member of the Woodstock (New York) Art Association. He was a versatile artist who worked in a variety of media. Along with many other Works Progress Administration (WPA) artists, he created murals and taught painting in New York City. Wolchonok also taught drafting and design at City College in New York City. His *The Art of Three Dimensional Design, How to create Space Figures* was among his best-known books. He particularly liked to work in oil, watercolor, and printmaking. His work was exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia.

Work in the 1930s was often neither easy nor safe. The man painting the bridge has neither hard hat nor safety harness to keep him secure. He just holds on with one hand while painting with the other. It's not possible to tell if he is painting a newly-constructed bridge or just doing maintenance by repainting it. It appears that he has painted almost the entire upper structure of the bridge, so already has been at even more dizzying heights. One can only wonder how he felt when he came home at night—perhaps a mix of happiness at having a job and relief to still be alive. – DS

## “DUST BOWL” PHOTOGRAPHS

The following eight photographs are from a file acquired by the Shogren-Meyer Collection that contains about 80 photographs, all of them approximately 8 x 10-inch, black-and-white publicity prints. Though the folder is labeled “Dust Bowl,” the pictures cover many aspects of the Great Depression. Set in rural areas and small towns in the U.S., the subjects include farmers, itinerants, people wearing dust masks, doctors with patients, farms, fields, roads, tents, stores, schools, and abandoned buildings. Eighteen states and the District of Columbia are featured, although most of the images come from the Midwest and Southwest. Among the photographers who are identified are Dorothea Lange (1895–1965), Russell Lee (1903–1986), Arthur Rothstein (1915–1985), and Marion Post Wolcott (1910–1990), all already represented in this exhibition. The standout image is that of Arthur Rothstein’s 1936 *Dust Storm, Cimarron County, Oklahoma*, one of the iconic images of the time (a different example of it acquired earlier by the Shogren-Meyer Collection is included in this exhibit).

Many of the “Dust Bowl” prints have hand-written notations, typed captions, or stamped information on their backs. Sources for the prints include the Farm Security Administration (FSA), the Library of Congress, the Associated Press, and the United States Department of Agriculture. Some of the prints carry wet stamps for the *Houston Post* or the *Milwaukee Journal*, but the vast majority are marked with the *Houston Chronicle’s* name. This is the most likely source for this small archive, possibly discarded as the newspaper switched to digital imagery. – CAP



Unknown photographer

**“Black Roller” Dust Storm, Clayton, New Mexico, May 21, 1937, 1937**

Gelatin silver print, 7 ½ x 10 ½ inches

INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA  
American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



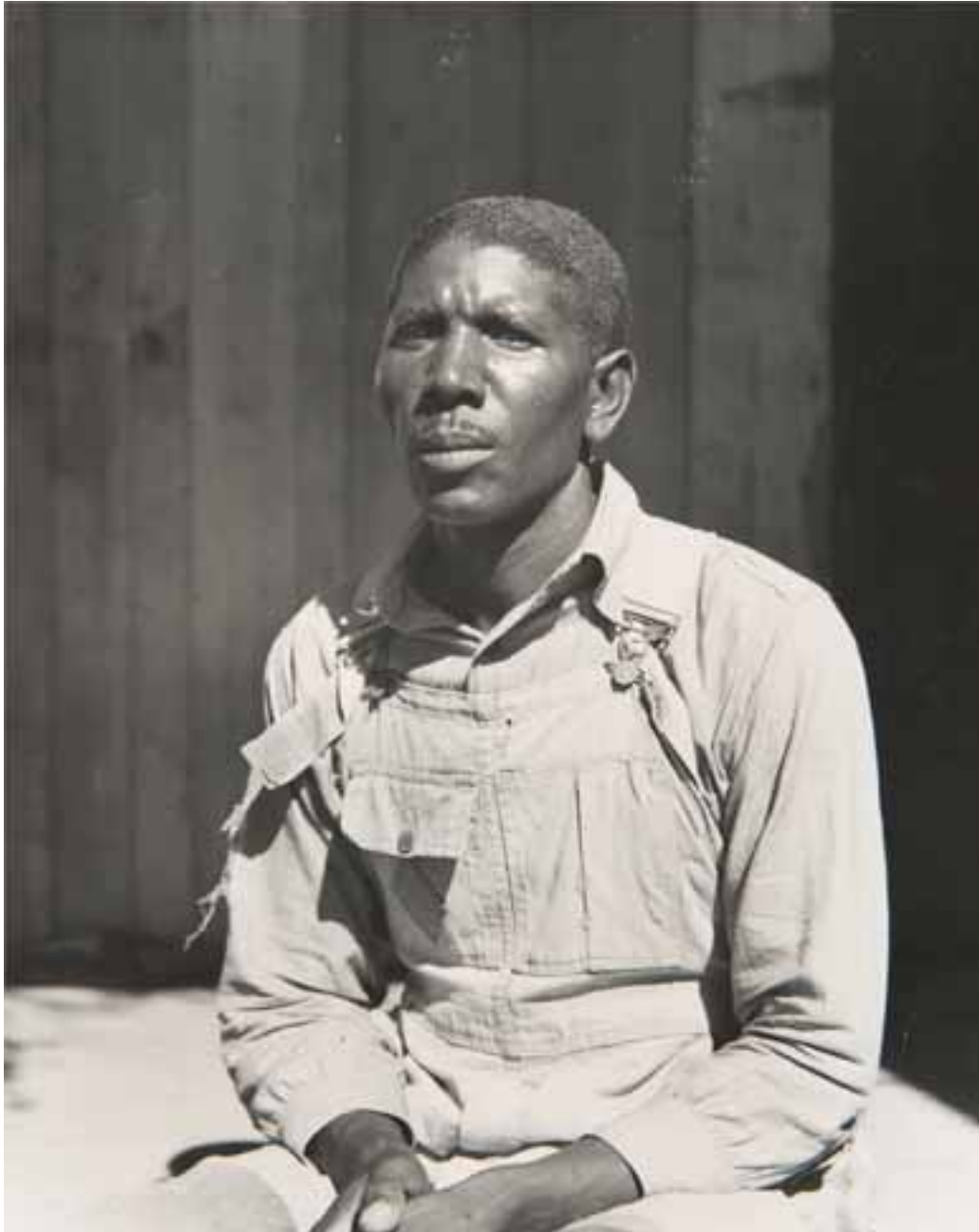
International News Photos

***Dust Storms Work Havoc in Oklahoma***, c.1935

Gelatin silver print, 7 ½ x 9 ¼ inches

“A view, like many, in Texas County, Oklahoma, where sand storms have wrecked the greatest wheat growing area of comparable size in the world. Texas County, which has produced as high as 10,000,000 bushels of wheat per year will not produce a single bushel this year.”

“DUST BOWL” PHOTOGRAPHS CONTINUED



Dorothea Lange (1895–1965)

*Day Laborer, Ellis County, Texas, 1937*

Gelatin silver print, 9 x 7 ½ inches

The Library of Congress owns the negative for this image, which is accompanied by the following information: “This man was a tenant on the same farm for 18 years. He has six children. This year he was forced into the status of day laborer on the same farm. The farm owner employed 23 tenant families last year. This year, the same acreage, using tractors, requires seven families.”



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Dorothea Lange (1895–1965)  
***Nettie Featherston, Childress County, Texas, 1938***  
Gelatin silver print, 9 x 7 ½ inches

This woman, the wife of a migrant laborer with three children, is also seen in Lange's more well-known image of the subject holding her head in her hands, and was made in the same county as Lange's image *Tractored Out* (also 1938).

“DUST BOWL” PHOTOGRAPHS CONTINUED



Dorothea Lange (1895–1965)

*McLennan County Courthouse, Just Before the Primary, Waco, Texas, 1938*

Gelatin silver print, 9 ¼ x 7 ¼ inches

INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA  
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Russell Lee (1903–1986)

*La Forge Farms, Cooperative, La Forge, Missouri*, 1938

Gelatin silver print, 7 ½ x 9 inches

“DUST BOWL” PHOTOGRAPHS CONTINUED



Russell Lee (1903–1986)

*White Migrant Workers Lying on Bed, in Tent House Near Mercedes, Texas, 1939*

Gelatin silver print, 7 x 9 ¼ inches

Hand-written on the back of the print is, “The place where they pitched their tent was a cow pasture across the road from our small cottage. It was humiliating for them to stand in line to get soup or bread, but as things worsened for them they were compelled to do so.”

INDUSTRY, WORK, SOCIETY, AND TRAVAILS IN THE DEPRESSION ERA  
American Paintings and Photographs from the Shogren-Meyer Collection



Russell Lee (1903–1986)

***Large Cajun Family Living on a Farm South of Crowley, Louisiana, 1938***

Gelatin silver print, 7 x 9 ¼ inches

This picture, made for the Farm Security Administration (FSA), shows 15 members of a three-generation family. Hand-written on the back is, "Yes, the farm population is increasing!"

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Margaret Bourke-White (1904-1971), *Louisville Flood*, 1937, gelatin silver print (printed no later than 1971), 7 x 9 3/8 inches.



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