

MULTIPLICITY

A High School Student Activity Guide based on the exhibition

WORKING THE GREAT THROUGH DEPRESSION

February 9 to June 9, 2009



Fig. 1: Minetta Good, *Artist at Work*, ca. 1935-1941, Lithograph, 10-3/4 x 9-3/8", Godwin-Ternbach Museum, P306.

Godwin-Ternbach Museum
Queens College, CUNY
Curated by Amy Winter & Marilyn L. Simon

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Godwin-
Ternbach
Museum

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PRE-MUSEUM ACTIVITY

Artists at Work: Value Study

LOOK & DISCUSS: Artists & The Great Depression

Fig. 1 is a **self-portrait**. What is the person doing? How did the artist show this? When do you think it was made? What **media** do you think it is? What do you see that makes you say that?

During **The Great Depression**, like other Americans, many artists were unemployed. In response, the government's **WPA/FAP** hired artists. They were paid about \$25/week to create a set number of artworks. Fig. 1 is a type of **print** called a **lithograph** that was created through this project. What shape is the outer edge of the work of art? Why do you think that is?

Have you ever made a print? Why do you think an artist would create a print instead of a drawing or painting, especially during difficult economic times? Each print was printed in an **edition** of approximately 25. That means instead of one original, there are 25 originals.

CREATE: Self-Portrait Value Study

In Fig. 1, the artist shows herself at work. Create a self-portrait of you at work creating art. Pose and have a partner photograph you. Print the photograph in grayscale to help you see the **values**. Transfer your photograph onto a sheet of white drawing paper. Use media of your choice and experiment with different techniques (crosshatching, stippling, blending) to add a full range of values to your drawing.

self-portrait: A work of art of an artist by him- or herself.

media: The material with which a work of art is created.

The Great Depression: An economic slump in North America, Europe, and other industrialized areas of the world that began in 1929 and lasted until about 1939.

WPA/FAP: (Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project) The WPA was begun by president Franklin Roosevelt in 1935 and the FAP added as a division of it. The FAP's two goals were to provide artworks for public buildings and jobs for unemployed artists.

print: A work of art that is created by pressing a printing block or plate with ink onto paper.

lithograph: A method of printmaking in which waxy crayons are used to draw on a stone.

value: The relative darkness or lightness of a color.

etching: A method of printmaking in which a metal plate is etched with acid.

series: A group of works of art created as a set and intended to be viewed as a group.

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IN-MUSEUM ACTIVITY

One Exhibition: Multiple Reflections

LOOK, LISTEN, & DISCUSS

All of the **prints** were made during the same period (1935-41) by artists in the New York Regional Graphic Art Division of the WPA/FAP. What groups are they divided into? How are they different? Similar? How do the music and documentary add to or change the experience? How many types of prints can you find (**lithographs, etchings**)?

SEARCH & SKETCH: Multiple Reflections

What type of images did you expect to see in this exhibition? Some of the artists focused on the struggles of the era, while others chose to highlight the positives. Why do you think this is?

Find two prints that you feel show opposite themes or viewpoints. Draw a sketch of each in the spaces on the right. Write the artist, title, date, medium, and answer the questions below.

Artist: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Medium: _____

What do you notice in this print?
How do you know that from the print?

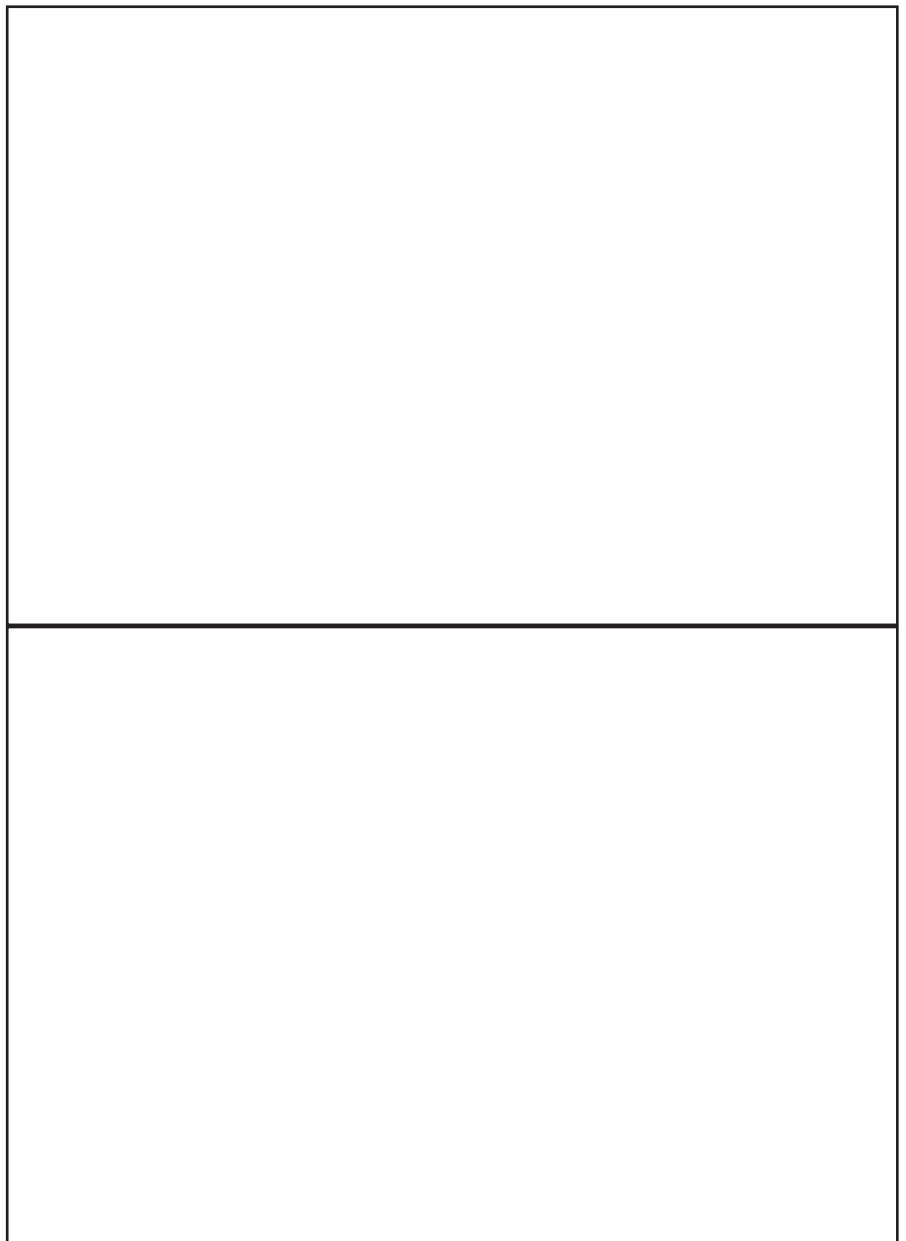
Artist: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Medium: _____

What does this print make you think about? How did the artist show this?



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POST-MUSEUM ACTIVITY

Modern MultipliCITY: Printmaking Series

LOOK & DISCUSS

Many are saying that the United States is on the brink of the “next Great Depression.” What do we face in the 21st century compared to what those in the 1930s did?

How would images today be different or similar? Look at your sketches from the Museum. Are these scenes we can still relate to? How might you change them to make them relevant now?

BRAINSTORM: Thinking in Multiples

It is very difficult to represent the complexities of an era with one single image. Artists often choose to work in **series** to convey a broader understanding. Brainstorm ideas for your own series of prints. What different images would you use to represent the **cityscapes, people at work, city limits, and relaxation** of New York in 2009? Your drawing from Activity 1 will be the first print in the series. Look at images of New York in current publications for additional ideas.

CREATE: Printmaking Series

- 1. Draw.** Make at least two simple drawings on separate sheets of white drawing paper.
- 2. Create your printing plates.**
To create scratchfoam prints, place scratchfoam beneath your drawings and trace over them to transfer the lines into the printing plate. Remove and add more details.
OR... To create cardboard relief prints, cut cardboard to size and cut more cardboard shapes for the details. **Glue** the layers together (start with the largest and build to the smallest) and **brush** on **varnish** to seal the plate.
- 3. Print.** Roll black **water-based ink** on your plates with a **brayer**. Place a sheet of white paper atop and roll with a clean brayer. Pull your print from the plate. Create an **edition**, or set number. Experiment with different colored and textured papers.
- 4. Hold a class critique:** How and why might everyone’s prints be different? Discuss.

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