

Gestures at Work & Play

An Elementary School Student Activity Guide based on the exhibition

WORKING | THE GREAT THROUGH | DEPRESSION

February 9 to June 9, 2009



Figure 1

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

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Godwin-
Ternbach
Museum

1 PRE-MUSEUM ACTIVITY

Gestures at Play



LOOK & DISCUSS: Artists & The Great Depression

During **The Great Depression**, many people including artists didn't have jobs. The government started the **WPA/FAP**, an organization that hired artists and paid them about \$25/week to create artwork. *Dance Hall* (Figure 1 on the cover) is a type of **print** called a **lithograph** created by the artist Harold Anchel in the 1930s while he was on the WPA/FAP. Have you ever made a print before? What type of print was it?

CREATE: Past-times Then & Now

Dance Hall (Figure 1) shows a scene in New York City. What's going on in this picture? Where are the people? What in the artwork makes you say that?

When people move, they hold themselves with **gestures** we can recognize. What gesture do you have when you dance? When you throw a ball or swing a bat? By showing different gestures, artists can show **movement** in a still work of art.

How can you tell this work of art is from the 1930s? What about it looks old-fashioned? How could you change it to make it more modern?

What do people do for fun in 2009? On a separate piece of paper, create a drawing that shows people enjoying a past-time today. Show movement by drawing the people with different **gestures**. Create a positive **mood** just like the artist Anchel with the expressions on their faces.

The Great Depression: An economic slump in North America, Europe, and other industrialized areas of the world from approximately 1929 to 1939.

WPA/FAP: (Works Progress Administration/ Federal Art Project) The WPA was begun by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1935 and the FAP added later. Two goals of the FAP were to provide artworks for public buildings and jobs for unemployed artists.

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

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

gesture: The position of the human body (may suggest an activity, movement, or emotion).

movement: The sense that something or someone is moving in a work of art.

mood: The feeling portrayed by a work of art.

self-portrait: A work of art by an artist in which s/he portrays her/himself.

edition: The total set of prints created by an artist from one plate or block.

frottage: An artistic technique in which a surface is rubbed to transfer and create design.

relief print: A type of print made by inking and printing raised areas.

2 IN-MUSEUM ACTIVITY

Gestures at Work

LOOK & DISCUSS: Compare and Contrast

Can you find Figures 1 and 2? How are these works of art similar and different? How are the peoples' **gestures** different? How do you think the women are feeling in Figure 2? Why?

SEARCH & SKETCH: People At Work

Figure 2 is part of the group in the exhibition called "People at Work." What job do you think these women have? What do you see that makes you say that? What other jobs can you recognize in these prints?

Choose one print, study it carefully, and draw it in the box on the right.

What job(s) does this artwork show?

What details did the artist include that tell us what job(s) they have?

How do you think the person/people is/are feeling? What do you see that makes you say that?

BRAINSTORM & CREATE

What job would you like to have when you grow up? What environment will you work in? What tools will you use? What type of clothing will you wear?

Create a **self-portrait** at your future job in the box on the right. Show yourself with a **gesture** and at least three details that show what job you have.



Figure 2 (detail): , Isaac Soyer (1902-1981), *The Scrubwomen*, 1936-37, Lithograph, 12-3/4 x 15-7/8" Godwin-Ternbach Museum, P017

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POST-MUSEUM ACTIVITY

Gestures X Two: Printmaking Methods

DISCUSS: Why Printmaking?

There are many different methods of printmaking. The prints you saw in the museum are **lithographs** and **etchings**. Why do you think an artist would make a print instead of a drawing or painting? What are the benefits to making prints?

When making prints, an artist can create many copies of the same image. First, the artist decides how many prints will be in the **edition**. As each is printed, they are numbered with a fraction. The bottom number (denominator) is the total number of prints in the edition, and the top number (numerator) is the number of that print.

CREATE: Printing Plates

Make your own printing plates using your original drawings from Activities 1 and 2. First, copy them with **pencil** onto larger pieces of **cardboard**. Keep them simple, using only line and not too much detail. Next, carefully trace over your lines with a trail of **glue**. Let dry. **Brush varnish** over the entire surface to seal the plates. Let dry.

CREATE: Frottage & Relief Prints

Create **rubbings** by placing paper on top of your plates and, using the side of a **crayon**, rub all over the surface. Remove the paper and repeat the **frottage** technique.

Create glue **relief prints** by applying **water-based printmaking ink** to your plates with a **brayer**. Then, place paper on top and roll a clean brayer on top to transfer the ink. Carefully pull the paper away from the plate and repeat.

Experiment with a variety of colored and textured papers and crayon and ink colors. Number your prints as you go.

Compare and Contrast: How are these two types of printmaking different? Similar? Which type did you enjoy more? Why?

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