

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

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New York City's complexity and dynamism are the subject of Manhattan Observed, an exhibition of forty-six prints by 38 artists on view at The Museum of Modern Art from March 22 through May 12. The exhibition offers a series of impressions and interpretations of the city from the 1900's to the present. From the earliest work, a Feininger cartoon of 1906, to the most recent, Joe Tilson's photogenic Empire State Building, the exhibition contrasts intimate views of city life with portrayals of its dynamic, syncopated pace and monolithic architectural mass, its physical presence over the decades with its spiritual essence and vitality. Manhattan Observed was selected by William S. Lieberman, Director, and Bernice Rose, Assistant Curator, Department of Drawings and Prints.

"Many artists have chosen to represent the changing landscape and architecture of the city; many have also attempted to define its disparate activities, moods and climates," states Mr. Lieberman. "This exhibition is not a portrait of Manhattan but rather a collection of impressions. The observations are essentially romantic or impersonal; the misery or the poverty of the city is seldom described."

The city's themes persist; their treatment varies enormously. Feininger's The Kin-der-kids Abroad is a grotesque fantasy of the port of New York dominated by its Statue of Liberty. A 1964 work, Rauschenberg's Front Roll, offers a dramatically different interpretation of the female, iron-spiked colossus. John Marin's tumultuous improvisation of the Brooklyn Bridge stands in contrast to a precisionist rendering by Louis Lozowick. "Which image is more real? The heroic triumph of the architectural span or the depiction of structural detail?" asks Mr. Lieberman.

To foreign artists New York has often seemed an imaginary mecca. For example, George Grosz had not yet visited the United States when, in 1916, he drew Memories of New York. "Grosz's kaleidoscope of Manhattan (with Chicago and Denver as its suburbs) visually counterparts Kafka's novel Amerika (1913), disquieting, fantastic (more)

and dynamic." Works by other European artists represent the variety of contemporary styles: Richard Hamilton paints a "pop" portrait of the Guggenheim Museum, Joe Tilson conveys the pulse of the nocturnal city, and the Colombian Omar Rayo, depicting a "gray flannel suit" by inkless intaglio, characterizes his image of Madison Avenue.

Several vanished monuments can be nostalgically recalled: The Lafayette by John Sloan, the Fulton Fish Market by Antonio Fransconi and the almost forgotten elevated trains of Third and Sixth Avenues, portrayed by half a dozen artists in the exhibition. Also from the past, another mood of the city is evoked by the Social Realism of the 1930's. Reginald Marsh's Breadline and Raphael Soyer's Power mission depict moments in the city's, and nation's, Depression crisis.

"Three artists suggest the pulse of New York as a throbbing metropolis: Eduardo Paolozzi situates a pair of robots between a babel of architecture and a conglomerate of mechanisms that conspire to suggest the accelerated agitations of a computer. Robert Rauschenberg's image of automobiles and athletes racing down Broadway combines transfers of photographs which, when disciplined into a lithograph, convey the nervous tension of the city's life and traffic. The last, Oskar Kokoschka's sweeping vista, looks down and across central Manhattan. The view, memorable and Olympian, illustrates eloquently what Henry James described as 'the fine exhilaration of New York.'"

All the works in the exhibition are from the Museum's collection, and about one third, all by American artists, were gifts to the collection from Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, part of her 1940 gift which established the nucleus of the Museum's Print Collection. Manhattan Observed will be on view in the Auditorium Gallery through May 12.

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, and Patricia B. Kaplan, Associate, Press Services, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.

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MANHATTAN OBSERVED

March 22 - May 12, 1968

Wall Label

By the beginning of the 20th century, in Europe and the United States, the upheaval and aspirations of the industrial and social revolutions had cast New York as the towering archetype of the modern metropolis. Its legend and personality were characterized by its heart, the island of Manhattan. In addition, with a life stream of thousands of immigrants, New York served as the threshold to a new world: a dream, an opportunity, a jungle.

Many artists have chosen to represent the changing landscape and architecture of the city; many have also attempted to define its disparate activities, moods and climates. This exhibition of some forty-six prints surveys only the decades of the 20th century. It is not a portrait of Manhattan but, rather, a collection of impressions. The observations are essentially romantic or impersonal. The misery or the poverty of the city are seldom described; the camera, perhaps, more eloquently documents urban agony.

The earliest work, Lyonel Feininger's grotesque fantasy of the port of New York dominated by its Statue of Liberty, was the initial installment of a comic strip commissioned in 1906. One of the most recent works, Front Roll by Robert Rauschenberg, offers a dramatically different interpretation of the iron-spiked colossus. Other recent works reflect the variety of contemporary styles. They include prints by several foreign artists Pol Bury, Richard Hamilton, David Hockney, Oskar Kokoschka, Eduardo Paolozzi, Omar Rayo and Joe Tilson. Today, as in the past, such international visitors enrich the megalopolitan scene. To foreign artists New York has often seemed an imaginary mecca. George Grosz, for instance, had not yet visited the United States when, in 1916, he drew Memories of New York. Grosz's
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kaleidoscope of Manhattan (with Chicago and Denver as its suburbs) is a visual counterpart to Kafka's novel Amerika (1913), disquieting, fantastic and dynamic.

More convincing topographically but also essentially futuristic in conception are John Marin's views of the Woolworth Building and Pol Bury's shattered, improbably real, Washington Bridge. Childe Hassam's shimmering vista of Fifth Avenue, George Bellows' plein-air arcadia and Jacques Villon's stenographic notation of Central Park West reaffirm an earlier, impressionist tradition.

Several monuments, now vanished, can be nostalgically recalled, for instance: The Lafayette by John Sloan, the Fulton Fish Market by Antonio Frasconi and, almost forgotten, the Third and Sixth Avenue "Els" portrayed by at least half a dozen artists in the exhibition. Two surviving monuments, vividly described by Charles Sheeler and Richard Hamilton, assert themselves as depersonalized architectural masses: the Delmonico Building on Park Avenue and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum on Fifth. The former soars in dramatic perspective, the latter sits solidly for a "pop" portrait.

Writers have often celebrated the Brooklyn Bridge once described by Thomas Wolfe as "a span, a cry, an ecstasy -- that was America." Two views of the Bridge in the exhibition should be compared: John Marin's tumultuous improvisation and a later, precisionist rendition by Louis Lozowick. Which image is more real? The heroic triumph of the architectural span, or the depiction of structural detail?

The 1930's, in American painting and printmaking, are associated with Social Realism. Reginald Marsh's spectral Breadline and Raphael Soyer's pathetic Bowery Mission record moments of a crisis in the city's, and the nation's, economy. Paul Cadmus' The Fleet's In! offers a more light-hearted aspect of the same Depression decade.

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Wall Street, Madison Avenue, even 38th Street at Seventh Avenue, are synonymous with specific professions. Larry Rivers, Omar Rayo and William Gropper characterize areas dedicated to banking, advertising, and the garment industry by symbol or by literal description. Much more difficult to particularize is the sense of isolation in the midst of a crowded capital, the individuality of anonymity -- phenomena peculiar to the modern city. How expressive, therefore, the moods created by Edward Hopper's East Side Interior, Martin Lewis' The Glow of a City and, even, Armin Landeck's stark, empty Alleyway.

Manhattan has many faces. To no one is it constant, but to many it is a city of night. Stefan Hirsch and Stow Wengenroth rhapsodize Manhattan's skyline after dark. Less romantic is Sekino's decorative yet ominous silhouette of the city at dusk as seen across Calvary Cemetery. The human aspects of the city at night are explored in other prints in the exhibition.

Glen Coleman's election bonfire celebrates a convivial manifestation of bygone political innocence on the lower East Side. Three broad caricatures are concerned with diversions: Adolph Dehn's "Die Walküre" at the Met, José Clemente Orozco's Vaudeville in Harlem and, two generations later, David Hockney's The Gospel Singing (Good People), Madison Square Garden. More dramatically visualized is the spectacle recorded by George Bellows -- the famous prize fight of 1923 when Dempsey knocked out Firpo in the second round. A different and more problematic type of violence that can fever the city at night is recorded in Robert Riggs' journalistic if prejudicial Accident Ward.

For a young Englishman, Joe Tilson, Manhattan is the "magic city of light." He prints a giant accordion of a postcard which expands to perpetrate scenic views; their illuminations shine more brightly than they could in actuality. Contrasts of light and shade are more subtly accented in the syncopations of Ralston Crawford, Stuart Davis and Louis Lozowick, each inspired by the Elevated Railways that once ran parallel up and down the island.

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Only three works in the exhibition suggest the pulse of New York as a throbbing metropolis, and all three are recent. Eduardo Paolozzi situates a pair of robots between a babel of architecture and a conglomerate of mechanisms that conspire to suggest the accelerated agitations of a computer. Robert Rauschenberg's image of automobiles and athletes racing down Broadway combines transfers of photographs which, when disciplined into a lithograph, convey the nervous tension of the city's life and traffic. Oskar Kokoschka's sweeping vista looks down and across central Manhattan. It is a bravura composition, and Kokoschka's lithograph is the only print in the exhibition that attempts to portray a panorama of Manhattan's towering, trembling monoliths. The view, memorable and Olympian, illustrates eloquently what Henry James described as "the fine exhilaration of New York."

All works in the exhibition are from the collections of The Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition was organized by the Department of Drawings and Prints for travel in the United States and Canada under the auspices of the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions.

William S. Lieberman

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MANHATTAN OBSERVED

March 22 - May 12, 1968

Checklist

BELLOWS, George. American, 1882-1925.

1. In the Park. (1916). Lithograph, printed in black, 16 x 21 3/16".
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 646.40. (S-9353).
2. Dempsey and Firpo. (1924). Lithograph, printed in black, 18 1/8 x
22 3/8". Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund. 556.51. (S-11.214).

BURY, Pol. Belgian, born 1922.

3. Washington Bridge. 1966. Serigraph, printed in color, on canvas,
40 1/8 x 30 1/8". Gift of the International Graphic Arts Society.
201.67. (Mathews 1271).

CADMUS, Paul. American, born 1904.

4. The Fleet's In! (1934). Etching, printed in black, 7 7/16 x 14 1/16".
Gift of Mrs. Stanley Resor. 565.54. (RP 577).

COLEMAN, Glenn O. American, 1887-1952.

5. Election Night. 1928. Lithograph, printed in black, 12 1/8 x 16 15/16".
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 722.40. (S-15.902).

CRAWFORD, Ralston. American, born 1906.

6. Third Avenue Elevated No. 1. (1952). Lithograph, printed in color,
16 3/8 x 17 3/8". Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund. 247.52. (S-12.584).

DAVIS, Stuart. American, 1894-1964.

7. Sixth Avenue El. (1931). Lithograph, printed in black, 12 x 18".
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 733.40. (S-15.308).

DEHN, Adolf. American, born 1895.

8. "Die Walküre" at the Met. 1930. Lithograph, printed in black, 13 7/16 x
17 7/8". Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 747.40. (S-2360).

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FEININGER, Lyonel. American, 1871-1956.

9. The Kin-der-Kids Abroad. (Comic strip published in The Chicago Sunday Tribune, May 6, 1906.) Newsprint halftone cuts printed in color, 23 3/8 x 17 13/16". Gift of the artist. 260.44.2. (S-17.707).
10. Manhattan III. (1955). Lithograph, printed in black, 10 13/16 x 8 3/4". Gift of Julia Feininger. 804.65. (RP 697).

FRASCONI, Antonio. Uruguayan, born 1919.

11. Fulton Fish Market. 1952. Woodcut, printed in color, 23 7/16 x 11 3/4" each section. Inter-American Fund. 84.54 a-d. (S-15.333 a-d; S-15.347 panel a; S-15.350 panel b; S-15.349 panel c; S-15.347 panel d).

GAG, Wanda. American, 1893-1946.

12. Elevated Station. (1925). Lithograph, printed in black, 13 3/8 x 15 15/16". Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund. 257.52. (S-2360).

GROPPER, William. American, born 1897.

13. Market on 38th Street. From the portfolio "12 Etchings." Published New York, 1965. Etching, printed in brown, 11 15/16 x 15 5/8". John B. Turner Fund. 16.66.7. (RP 584).

GROSZ, George. American, born and died in Germany, 1893-1959.

14. Memories of New York. 1916. From "First George Grosz Portfolio," a suite of nine prints published in 1917. Lithograph, printed in black, 14 3/4 x 11 5/8". Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund. 483.49.1. (S-14.853).

HAMILTON, Richard. British, born 1922.

15. Guggenheim. (1965). Serigraph, printed in color, 22 x 22". Joseph G. Mayer Foundation Fund. 642.65. (RP 678).

HASSAM, Childe. American, 1859-1935.

16. Fifth Avenue: The Avenue of the Allies. 1918. Drypoint, printed in brown-black, 14 3/4 x 9 11/16". Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 937.40. (RP 582).

HIRSCH, Stefan. American, born 1899.

17. Central Park. 1930. Lithograph, printed in black, 8 11/16 x 12 9/16". Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 953.40. (S-8905).

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HOCKNEY, David. British, born 1937.

18. The Arrival. From "A Rake's Progress, London/New York," a suite of 16 prints. Published 1963. Etching and aquatint, printed in black and red, 15 3/4 x 19 3/8". Mrs. Alfred R. Stern Fund. 521.64.1. (Studly BL-99).
19. The Gospel Singing (Good People), Madison Square Garden. From "A Rake's Progress, London/New York," a suite of 16 prints. Published 1963. Etching and aquatint, printed in black and red, 15 3/4 x 19 3/8". Mrs. Alfred R. Stern Fund. 521.64.4. (Studly BL 97).

HOPPER, Edward. American, 1882-1967.

20. East Side Interior. (1922). Etching, printed in black, 7 7/8 x 9 7/8". Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 961.40. (S-234).

KOKOSCHKA, Oskar. British, born 1886.

21. Manhattan I. From the portfolio "Manhattan 1967." Published 1967. Lithograph, printed in black, 22 x 25 1/4". Adriane Reggie Fund. xxx.68.

LANDECK, Armin. American, born 1905.

22. Alleyway. (1948). Drypoint, printed in black, 13 7/8 x 6 15/16". Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund. 88.49. (S-9323).

LEWIS, Martin. American, 1882-1962.

23. The Glow of the City. (1930). Etching, printed in brown-black, 11 7/16 x 14 3/8". Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund. 609.54. (S-13.695).

LOZOWICK, Louis. American, born 1892.

24. Hanover Square. 1929. Lithograph, printed in black, 14 11/16 x 8 15/16". Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 1215.40. (S-15.307).
25. Brooklyn Bridge. 1930. Lithograph, printed in black, 13 x 7 7/8". Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 1218.40. (S-15.307).

MARIN, John. American, 1870-1953.

26. Woolworth Building, New York, No. 3. 1913. Etching, printed in black, 13 1/16 x 10 5/8". Edward M. M. Warburg Fund. 84.55. (S-1545).
27. Woolworth Building, New York, No. 4. 1913. Etching, printed in black, 12 13/16 x 10 7/16". Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 1237.40. (Rainford 414).
28. Brooklyn Bridge, No. 6. 1913. Etching, printed in black, 10 3/4 x 8 7/8". Edward M. M. Warburg Fund. 85.55. (S-13.003).

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MARSH, Reginald. American, 1898-1954.

29. Breadline. (1932). Etching, printed in black, 6 9/16 x 11 15/16".
Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund. 95.65. (RP 675).

OROZCO, José Clemente. Mexican, 1883-1949.

30. Vaudeville in Harlem. (1929). Lithograph, printed in black, 11 7/8 x 15 7/8". Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 1545.40. (S-6620).

PAOLOZZI, Eduardo. British, born 1924.

31. Wittgenstein in New York. 1964. Study for the serigraph of the same title from a portfolio of 12 serigraphs "As Is When," published 1965. Collage of paper, photomechanical reproductions, photographs, felt tip pen and pencil, 30 5/8 x 21". Gift of the artist. 2395.67. (Mathews 1269).

RAUSCHENBERG, Robert. American, born 1925.

32. Front Roll. 1964. Lithograph, printed in color, 36 3/4 x 27 3/4".
Gift of the Celeste and Armand Bartos Foundation. 525.64. (RP 2562).
33. Sink. 1964. Lithograph, printed in black, 14 1/16 x 16 1/8". Gift of the Celeste and Armand Bartos Foundation. 653.64. (RP 581).

Note: One of 7 postscripts to 34 Drawings for Dante's "Inferno."

RAYO, Omar. Colombian, born 1928.

34. Madison Avenue. From the portfolio "Made in U.S.A." 1963. Inkless intaglio, 26 15/16 x 16 11/16" (irregular). Gift of David Rockefeller. 209.65.5. (RP 679).

RIGGS, Robert. American, born 1896.

35. Accident Ward. (1941). Lithograph, printed in black, 14 3/8 x 18 15/16". Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund. 194.57.

RIVERS, Larry. American, born 1923.

36. Downtown Lion. 1967. Etching, printed in color, 11 5/8 x 17 7/16".
Gift of the Celeste and Armand Bartos Foundation. 2192.67. (Mathews 1270).

SEKINO, Jun'ichiro. Japanese, born 1914.

37. New York and Graveyard. 1959. Woodcut, printed in color, 12 5/16 x 19 9/16". The Felix and Helen Juda Fund. 670.65. (RP 674).

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SHEELER, Charles. American, 1883-1965.

38. Delmonico Building. (1926). Lithograph, printed in black, 9 3/4 x 6 11/16". Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 1267.40. (S-9351).

SLOAN, John. American, 1871-1951.

39. Snowstorm over Greenwich Village. 1925. Etching, printed in black, 6 7/8 x 5". Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 1363.40. (RP 580).
40. The Lafayette. 1928. Etching, printed in black, 5 x 6 7/8". Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 1381.40. (RP 579).

SOYER, Raphael. American, born 1889.

41. The Mission. (1935). Lithograph, printed in black, 12 1/8 x 17 1/4". Gift of Mrs. Bertha M. Slattery. 454.54. (RP 578).

TILSON, Joe. British, born 1928.

42. P. C. from N. Y. C. (1965). Serigraph, printed in color, 78 x 22" (irregular). Joseph G. Mayer Foundation Fund. 433.66. (Varon 53).
43. Diapositive, Empire State Building. 1967. Color diapositive and serigraph on acetate film with metallised acetate film, 28 x 20". Gift of Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York. xxx.68.

VILLON, Jacques. French, 1875-1963.

44. New York. 1935. Lithograph, printed in black, 5 7/8 x 11 3/16" (irregular). Given anonymously in memory of Victor S. Riesenfeld. 592.65. (RP 676).

WEBER, Max. American, 1881-1961.

45. Brooklyn Bridge. (1928). Lithograph, printed in black, 6 3/16 x 8 9/16". Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. 1444.40.

WENGENROTH, Stow. American, born 1906.

46. New York Nocturne. (1945). Lithograph, printed in black, 9 15/16 x 17". John B. Turner Fund. 673.65. (RP 583).

Note: All prints are from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York