Manhattan observed : selections of drawings and prints

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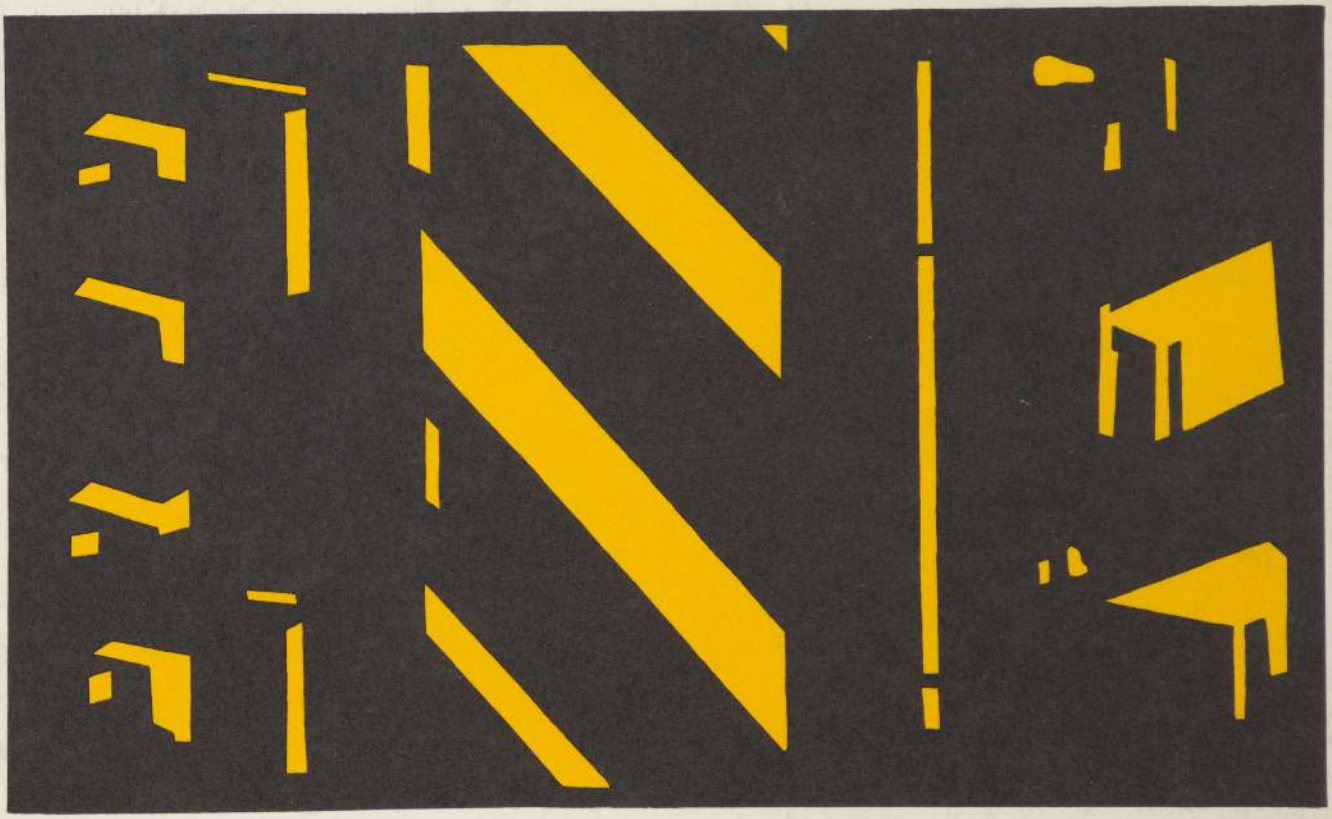
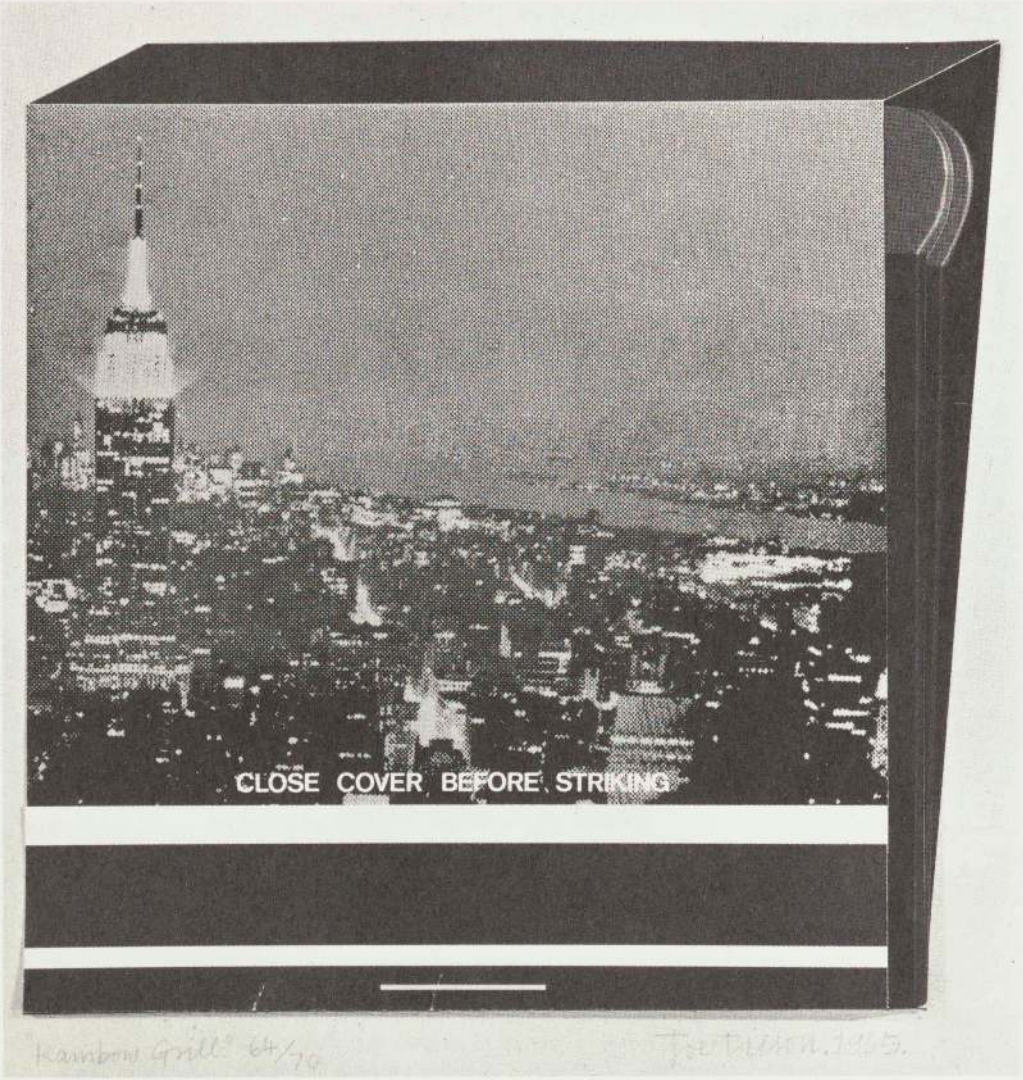


MANHATTAN OBSERVED

Cover: RALSTON CRAWFORD. American, born 1906. *Third Avenue Elevated No. 1.* (1952).
Color lithograph, 16⅜ x 17⅜ inches. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund.

Frontispiece: JOE TILSON. British, born 1928. *Rainbow Grill.* 1965.
Color serigraph on vacuform plastic, 24 x 24 x ⅝ inches. Joseph G. Mayer Foundation Fund.


CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING

MANHATTAN OBSERVED

SELECTIONS OF DRAWINGS AND PRINTS EDITED BY WILLIAM S. LIEBERMAN

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

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INTRODUCTION

. . . But who can comprehend the meaning of the voice of the city? O. Henry

By the beginning of the twentieth century, in Europe and the United States, the upheaval and aspiration of the industrial and social revolutions cast New York as the towering archetype of the modern metropolis. Its legend, its personality were characterized by its heart—the island of Manhattan. New York also served as the threshhold to a new world. With a life stream of thousands of immigrants, it was a dream, an opportunity, a jungle.

Many artists have represented the changing landscape and architecture of the city; many have also attempted to define its disparate activities, moods, and weather. The earliest of the interpretations that follow, Lyonel Feininger's whimsical grotesque of the port of New York dominated by its Statue of Liberty, was the initial installment of a comic strip commissioned—by a Chicago newspaper—in 1906. One of the most recent, *Front Roll,* by Robert Rauschenberg, offers a dramatically different interpretation of the bronze-spiked colossus. The sum of these views is not a portrait of Manhattan but, rather, a collection of impressions. As observations they are essentially romantic or impersonal. The misery or the poverty of the city is seldom described; the camera more eloquently perhaps documents urban agony.

Several, disparate assessments are made by foreign artists, among them Pol Bury, Richard Hamilton, David Hockney, Oskar Kokoschka, José Clemente Orozco, Eduardo Paolozzi, Jun'ichiro Sekino, Joe Tilson and Jacques Villon. Today, as in the past, such international visitors enrich our megalopolitan scene. To them, New York has often seemed a mecca, albeit imaginary. George Grosz, for instance, had not yet ventured to the United States when, in 1916, he drew *Memories of New York*. His kaleidoscope of Manhattan (with Chicago and Denver as its suburbs) offers a visual counterpart to Kafka's novel *Amerika* (1913), disquieting, fantastic, fractured.

More convincing topographically but similarly futuristic in conception are John Marin's views of the Woolworth Building and Brooklyn Bridge, as well as Pol Bury's shattered, improbably real Washington Bridge. By contrast, 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, may be nostalgically recalled, for instance the *Fulton Fish Market* by Antonio Frasconi, and—almost forgotten—the Third and Sixth Avenue "Els" portrayed by five artists. Two surviving monuments, vividly described by Charles Sheeler and Richard Hamilton, assert themselves as depersonalized architectural masses: the Delmonico Building on Park, 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 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?

In Manhattan, certain streets are synonymous with specific professions. William Gropper's *Market on 38th Street* at Seventh Avenue, for instance, characterizes an aspect of the garment industry. 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' *Subway Steps* and Armin Landeck's stark, empty *Alleyway*.

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 offers a different and special aspect of the same Depression decade.

In the twentieth century, as never before, New York has dominated the world of contemporary art. The attitudes of two young artists, David Hockney and R. B. Kitaj, are less than reverent. The plates from Hockney's "A Rake's Progress: London/New York" describe autobiographically and with wit two adventures during an artist's first visit. Kitaj's *Vernissage Cocktail*, a provoking and opinionated translation of a photograph into a serigraph, pokes fun at New York's abstract expressionistic painters as they appeared in 1951.

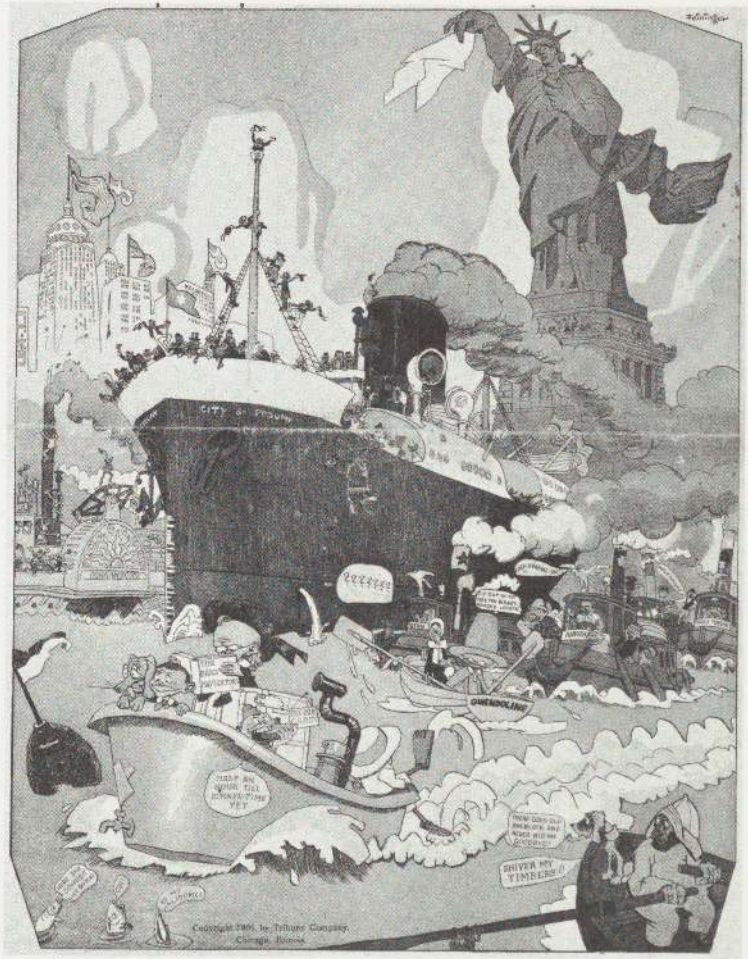
JACQUES VILLON. French, 1875-1963. *New York* 1935
Lithograph, 5⅞ x 11¾ inches (irreg.) Given anonymously in memory of Victor S. Riesenfeld.

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. More decorative but less romantic is Sekino's ominous silhouette of the city at dusk as seen across Calvary Cemetery in Queens.

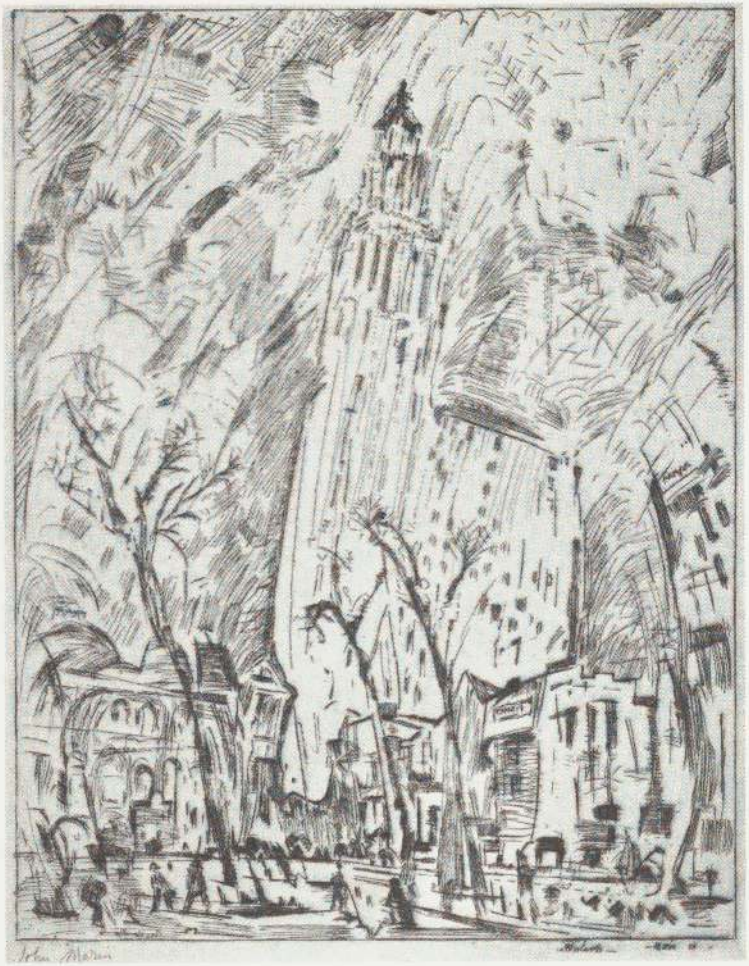
Human aspects of the city at night are also explored. Glen Coleman's election bonfire celebrates a convivial manifestation of bygone political innocence on the lower East Side. Three broad caricatures are concerned with divertisements: Adolph Dehn's *"Die Walküre" at the Met*, José Clemente Orozco's *Vaudeville in Harlem* and, two generations later, David Hockney's *The Gospel Singing* at Madison Square Garden. For a young Englishman, Joe Tilson, Manhattan is the "magic city of light." He prints a giant postcard of the Rainbow Room Grill. Contrasts of light and shade are more subtly accented in the syncopations of Ralston Crawford and Stuart Davis, both inspired by the elevated railways that once ran parallel up and down the island.

Only three works 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 cinematic collage combines, transfers of photographs and reversed views 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 is the only print 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."

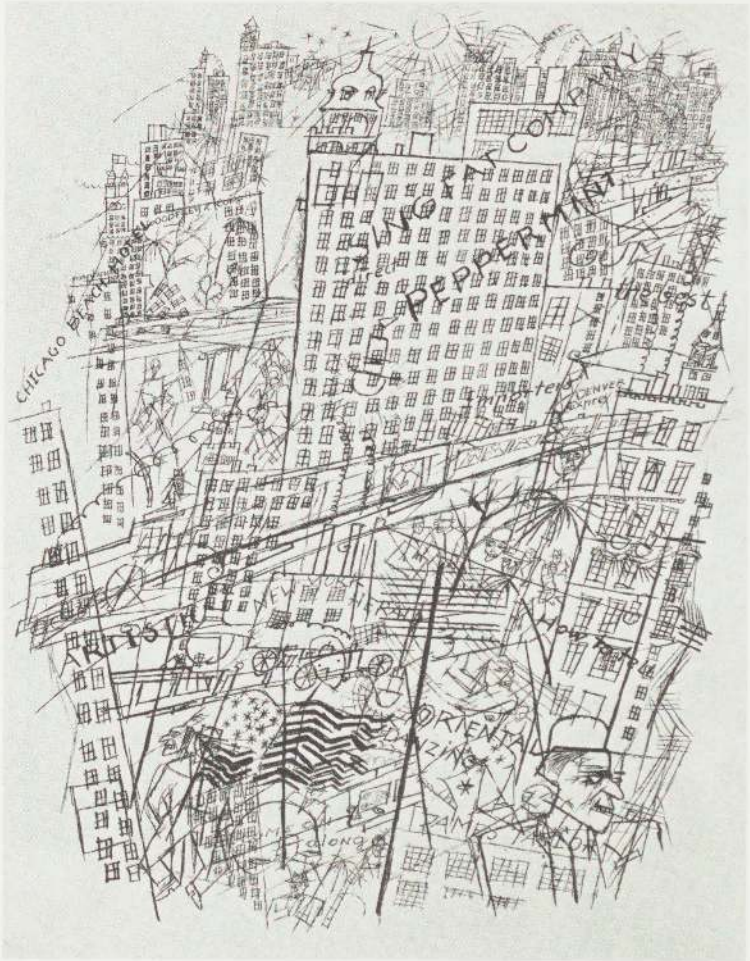
WILLIAM S. LIEBERMAN



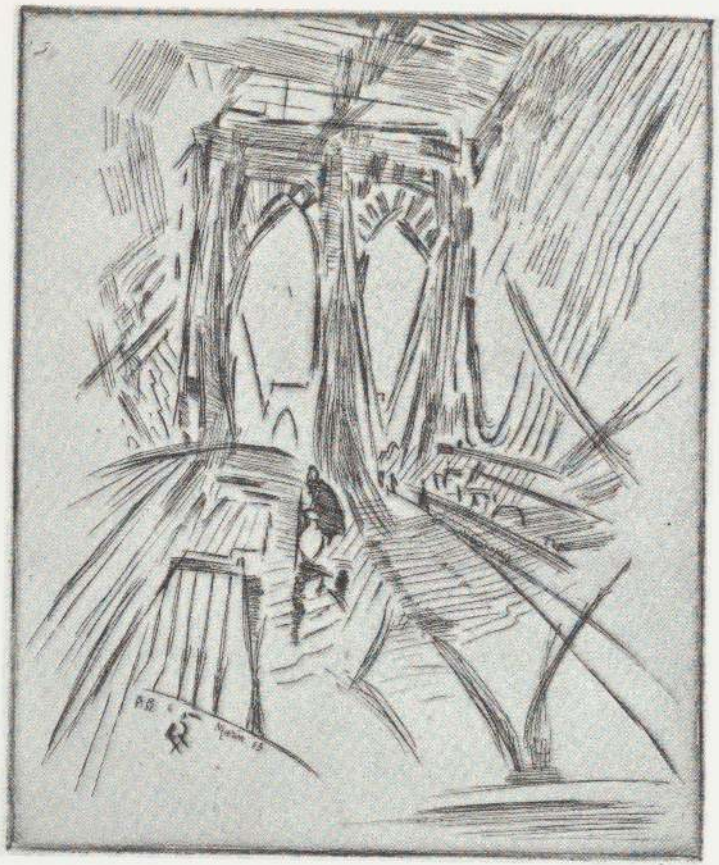
LYONEL FEININGER. American, 1871-1956. *The Kin-der-Kids Abroad.*
Detail from comic strip published in *The Chicago Sunday Tribune*, May 6, 1906.
Color halftone cut on newsprint, 23⅜ x 17¾ inches. Gift of the artist.



JOHN MARIN. American, 1870-1953. *Woolworth Building, New York, No. 3.* 1913.
Etching, 13 x 10⅝ inches. Edward M. M. Warburg Fund.

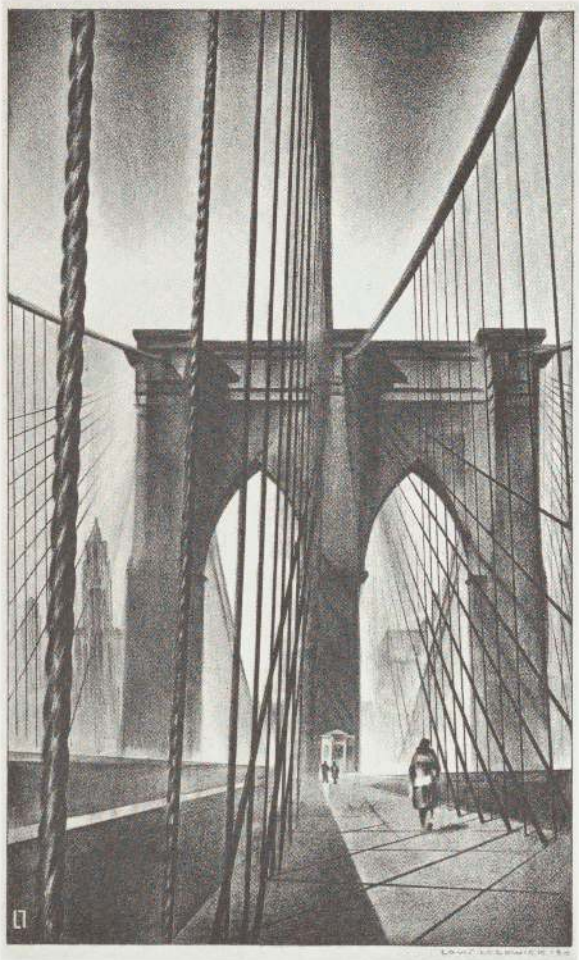


GEORGE GROSZ. American, born and died in Germany, 1893-1959. *Memories of New York*. 1916.
From "First George Grosz Portfolio," a suite of nine prints. Published 1917.
Lithograph, 14¾ x 11⅝ inches. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund.



Above: JOHN MARIN. *Brooklyn Bridge, No. 6.* 1913.
Etching, 10¾ x 8⅞ inches. Edward M. M. Warburg Fund.

Opposite: POL BURY. Belgian, born 1922. *Washington Bridge.* 1966.
Color serigraph on canvas, 40⅛ x 30⅛ inches. Gift of the International Graphic Arts Society.

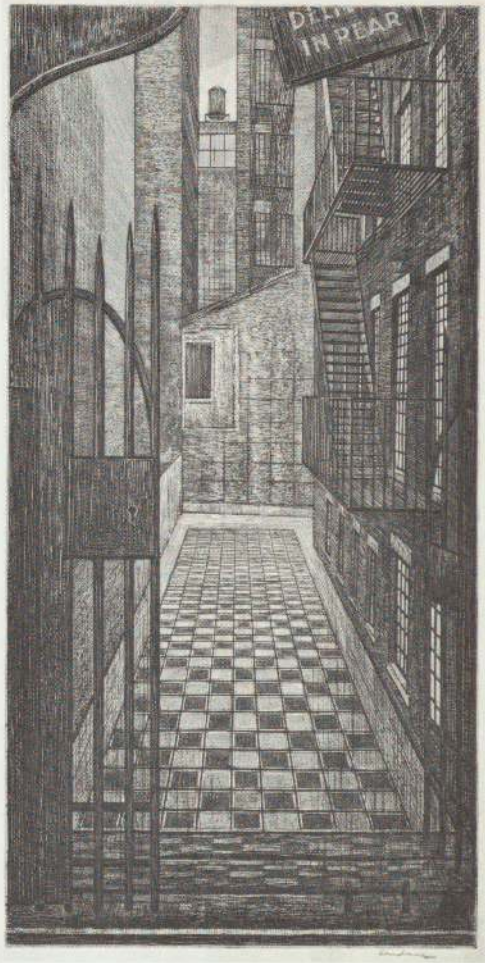


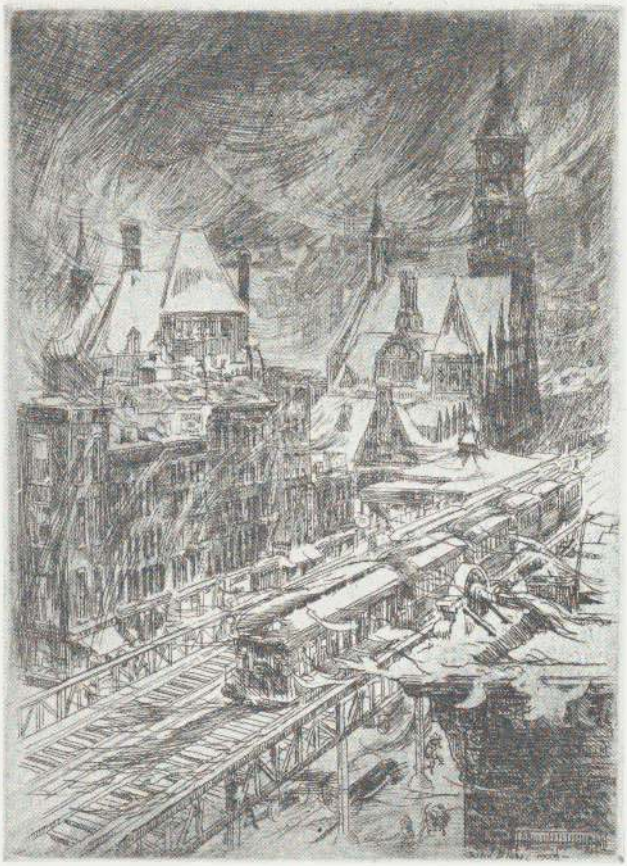
Left: LOUIS LOZOWICK. American, born 1892. *Brooklyn Bridge*. 1930. Lithograph, 13 x 7⅞ inches. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.

Opposite left: ANTONIO FRASCONI. Uruguayan, born 1919. *Fulton Fish Market*. 1952. Third part of a four-part color woodcut, 23⅜ x 11¾ inches. Inter-American Fund.

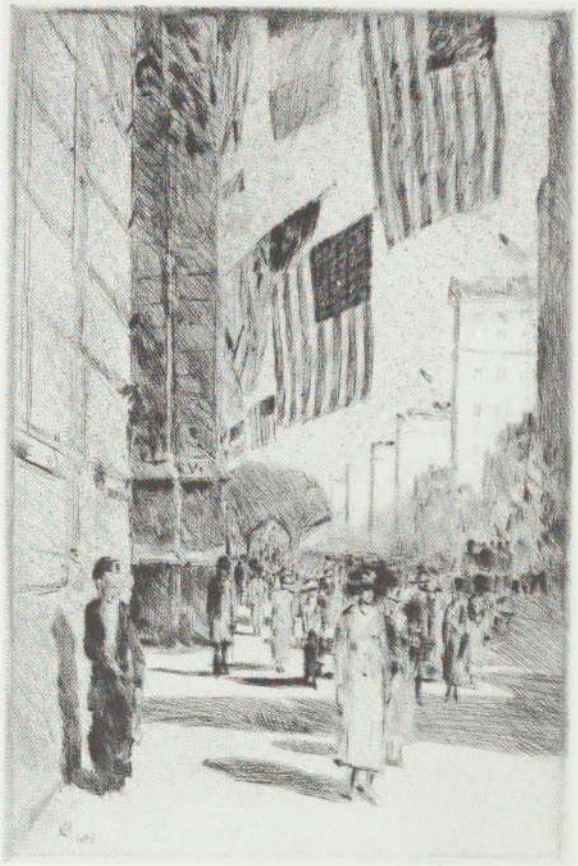
Opposite right: ARMIN LANDECK. American, born 1905. *Alleyway*. (1948). Drypoint, 13⅞ x 7 inches. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund.

SAM LENZA Inc.
LOBSTERS and SEA FOOD





JOHN SLOAN. American, 1871-1951. *Snowstorm over Greenwich Village*. 1925.
Etching, 6⅞ x 5 inches. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.

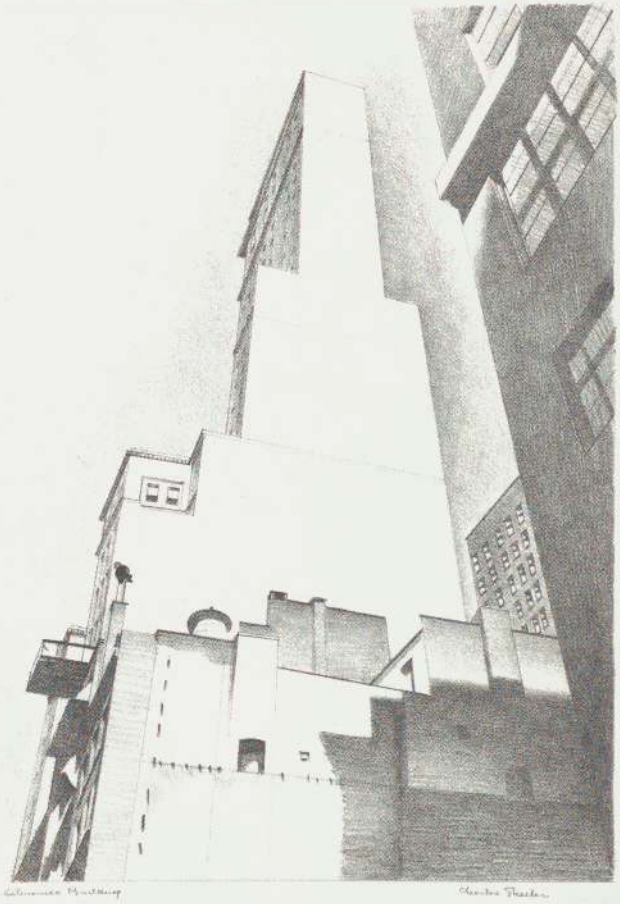


CHILDE HASSAM. American, 1859-1935. *Fifth Avenue: The Avenue of the Allies*. 1918.
Drypoint, 14¾ x 9⅝ inches. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.

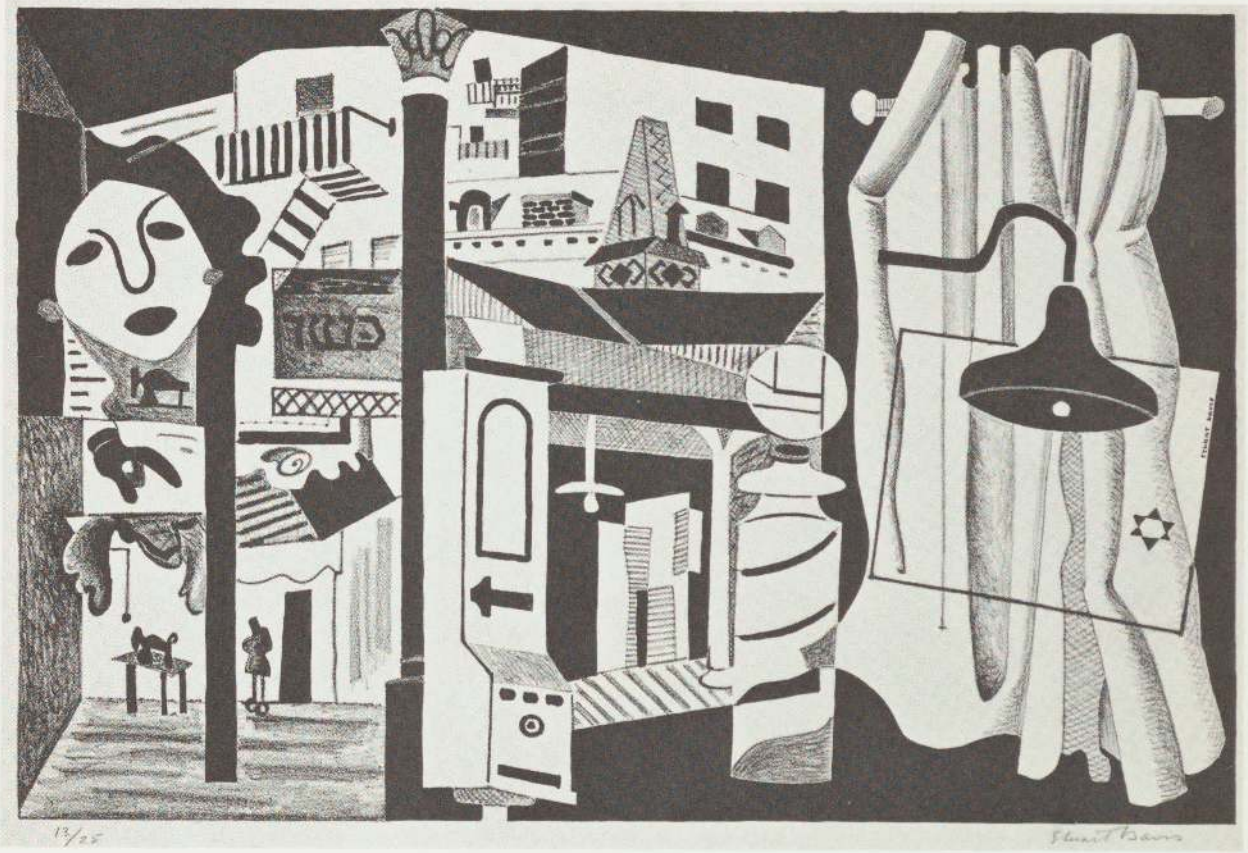
MARTIN LEWIS. American, 1882-1962. *Subway Steps.* (1930).
Etching and drypoint, 13¾ x 8⅛ inches. Gift of Dr. Jack Budowsky.

GEORGE BELLOWS. American, 1882-1925. *In the Park.* (1916).
Lithograph, 16 x 21⅛ inches. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.

RICHARD HAMILTON. British, born 1922. *Guggenheim.* (1965).
Color serigraph, 22 x 22 inches. Joseph G. Mayer Foundation Fund.

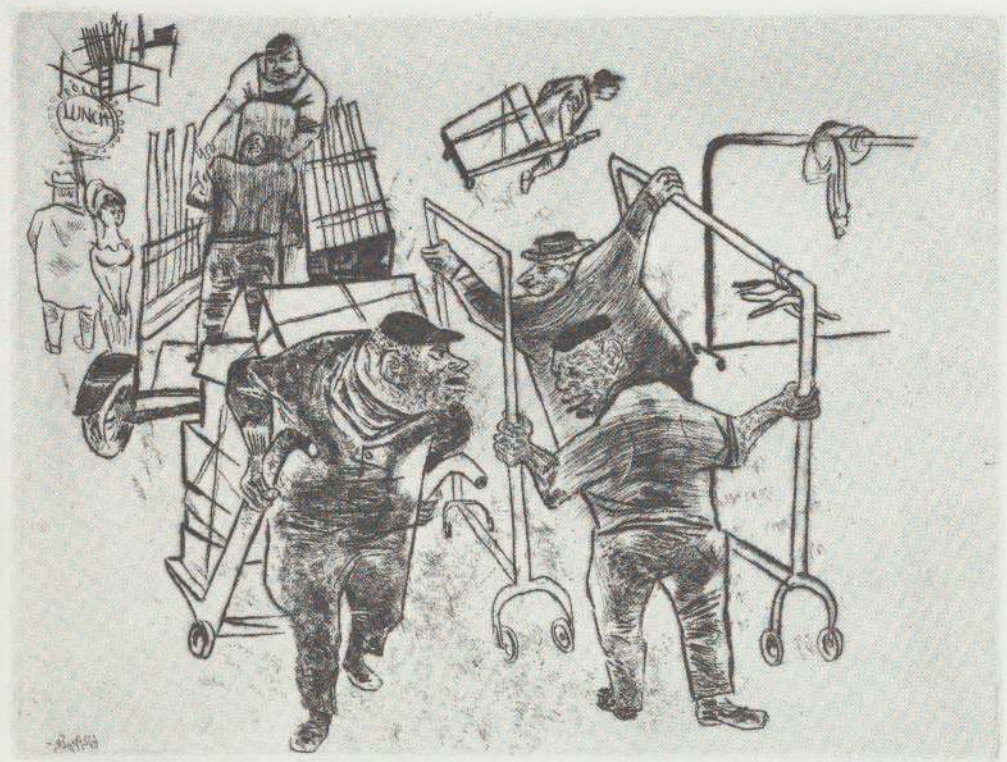


CHARLES SHEELER. American, 1883-1965. *Delmonico Building*. (1926).
Lithograph, 9¾ x 6⅝ inches. Gift of Abbey Aldrich Rockefeller.



Opposite: ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG. American, born 1925. *Front Roll.* 1964. Color lithograph, 36¾ x 27¾ inches. Gift of The Celeste and Armand Bartos Foundation.

Above: STUART DAVIS. American, 1894-1964. *Sixth Avenue El.* (1931). Lithograph, 12 x 18 inches. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.



WILLIAM GROPPER. American, born 1897. *Market on 38th Street*, from the portfolio "12 Etchings." Published New York, 1965. Etching, 11⅞ x 15⅝ inches. John B. Turner Fund.

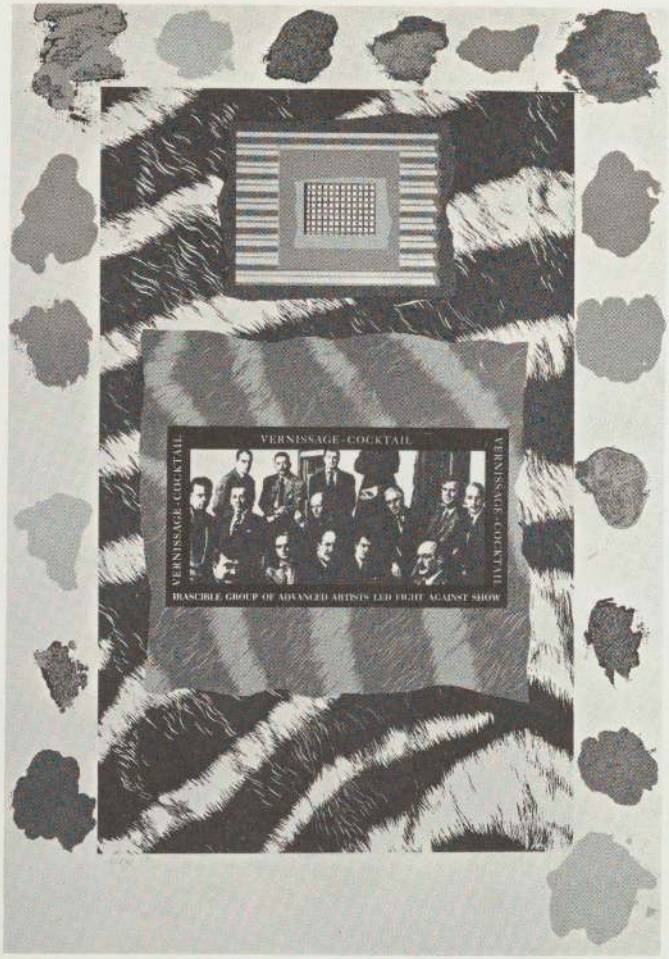
PAUL CADMUS. American, born 1904. *Stewart's*. (1934).
Etching, 8 x 11⅞ inches. Gift of Mr. Irving Drutman.

REGINALD MARSH. American, 1898-1954. *Breadline.* (1932).
Etching, 6½ x 12 inches. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund.

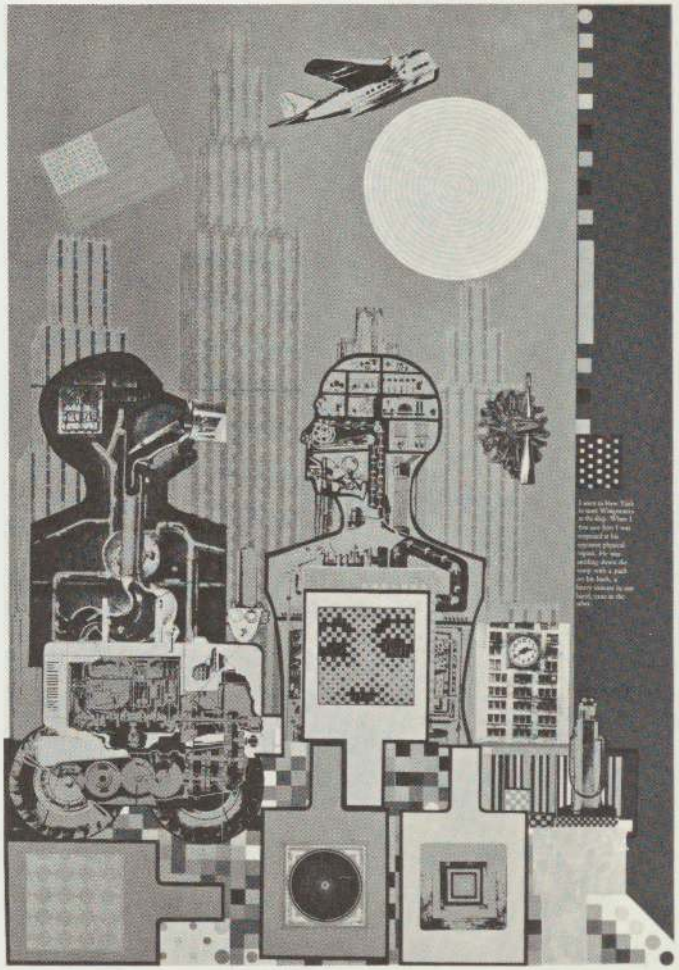
RAPHAEL SOYER. American, born 1889. *The Mission.* (1935).
Lithograph, 12⅛ x 17¼ inches. Gift of Bertha M. Slattery.

Above: EDWARD HOPPER. American, 1882-1967. *East Side Interior.* (1922).
Etching, 7⅞ x 9⅞ inches. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.

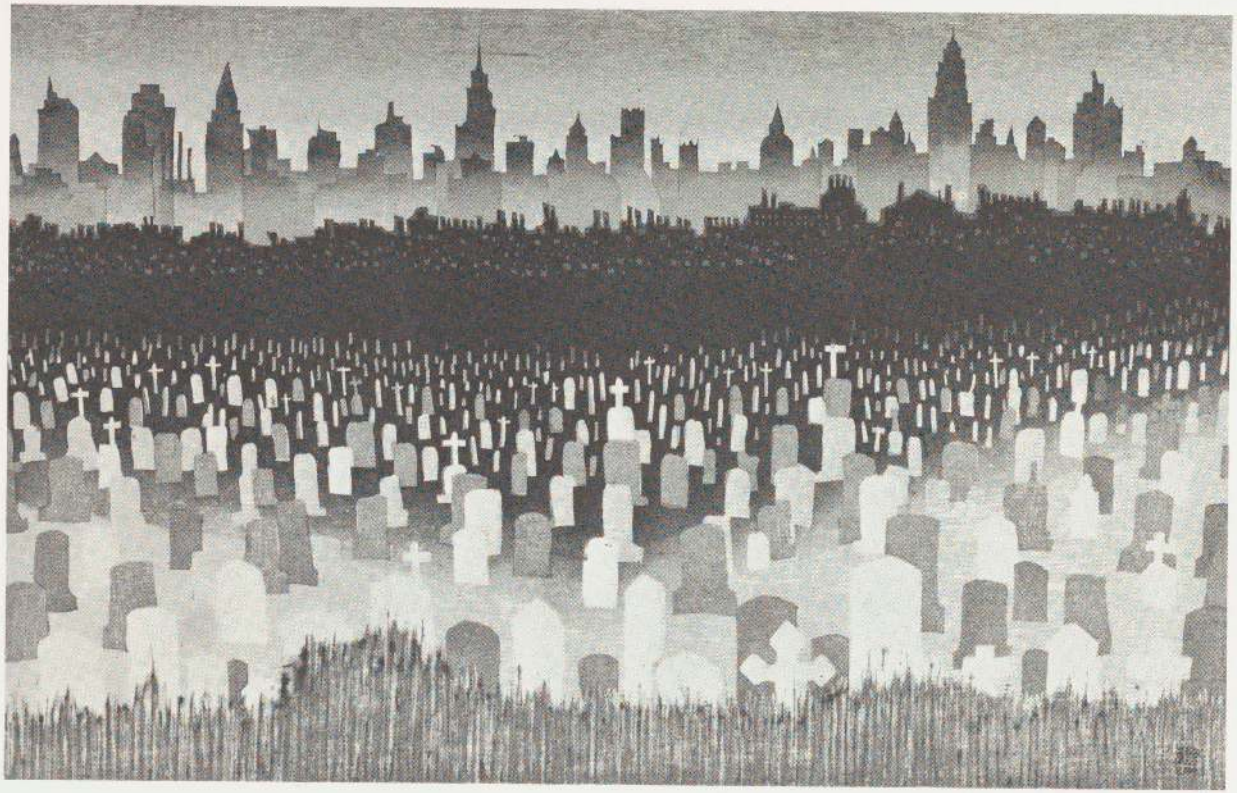
Opposite: STOW WENGENROTH. American, born 1906. *New York Nocturne.* (1945.)
Lithograph, 9⅞ x 17 inches. John B. Turner Fund.



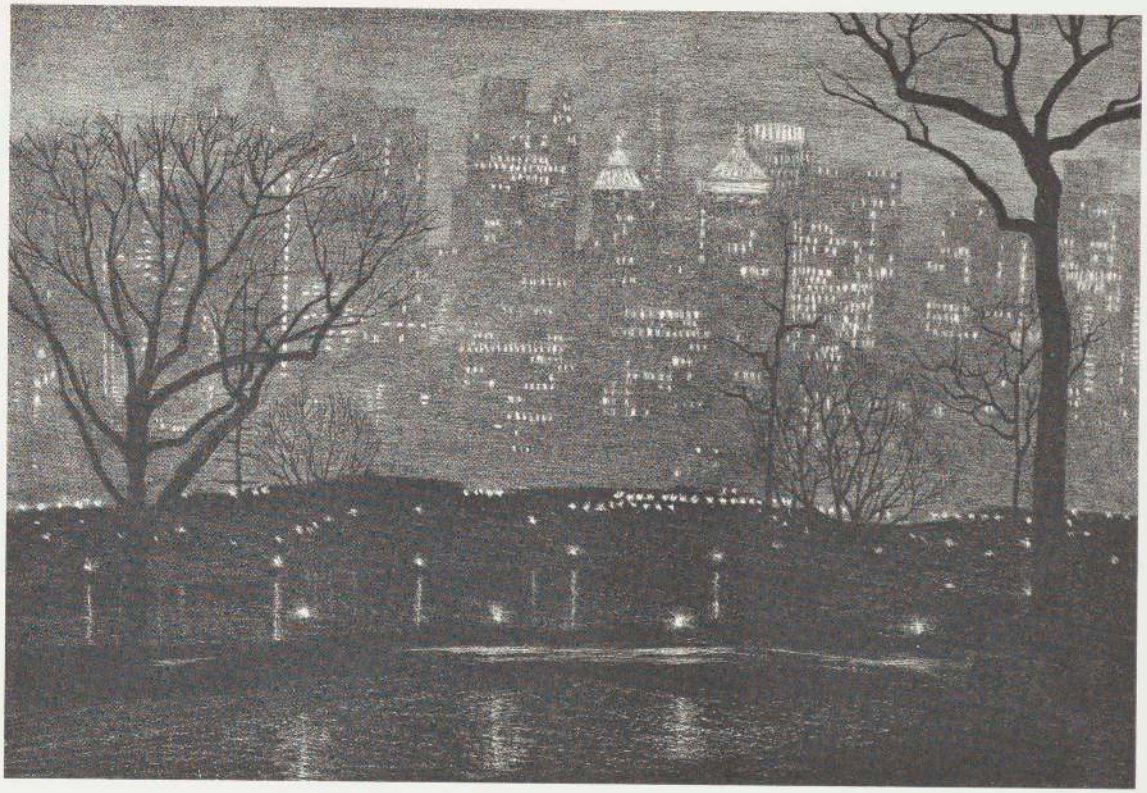
RONALD KITAJ. American, born 1932. *Vernissage Cocktail.* (1967). Color serigraph, 39 x 27 inches. John B. Turner Fund.



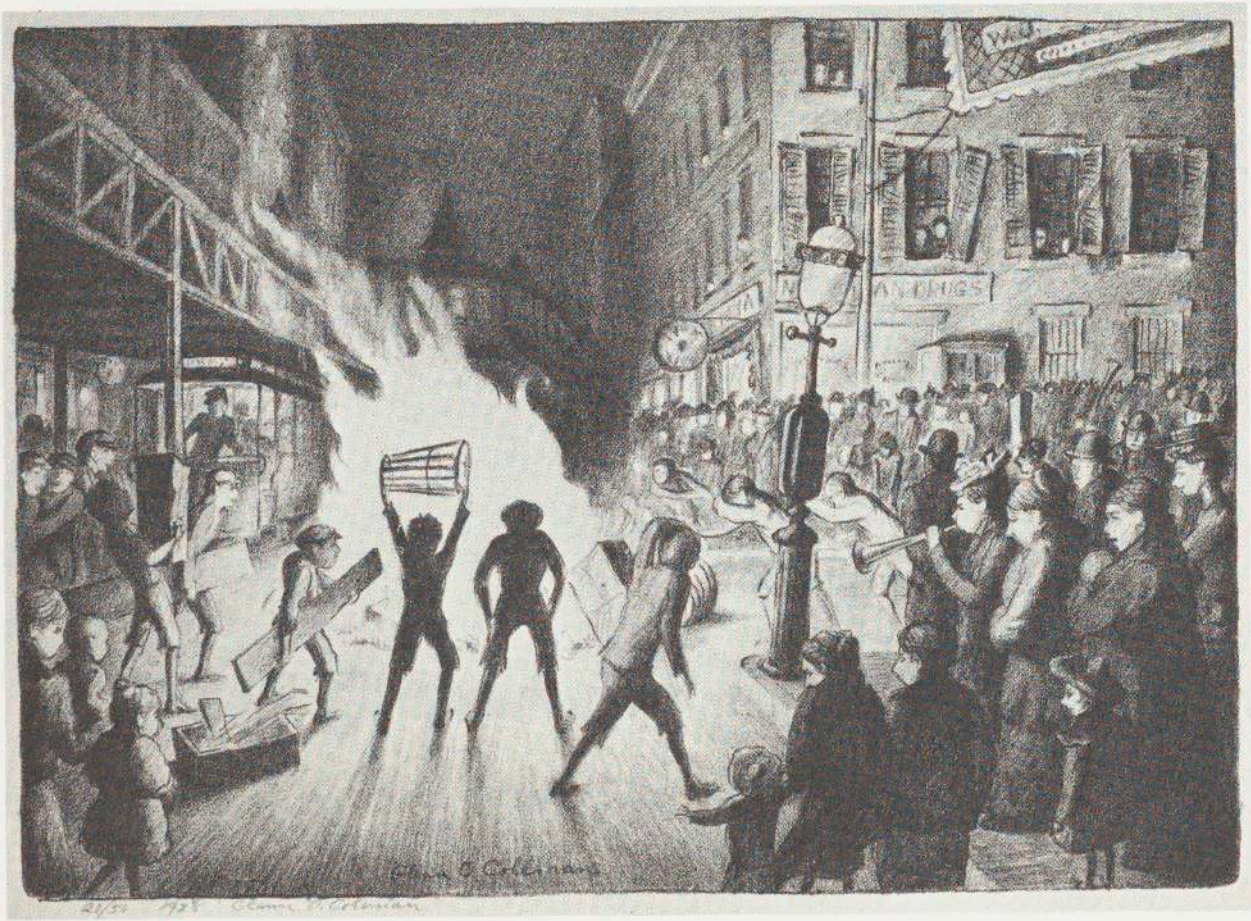
EDUARDO PAOLOZZI. British, born 1924. *Wittgenstein in New York*, from the portfolio "As Is When." 1965. Serigraph, 30 x 21⅛ inches. Purchase.



JUN'ICHIRO SEKINO. Japanese, born 1914. *New York and Graveyard*. 1959.
Color woodcut, 12⅜ x 19⅝ inches. The Felix and Helen Juda Fund.

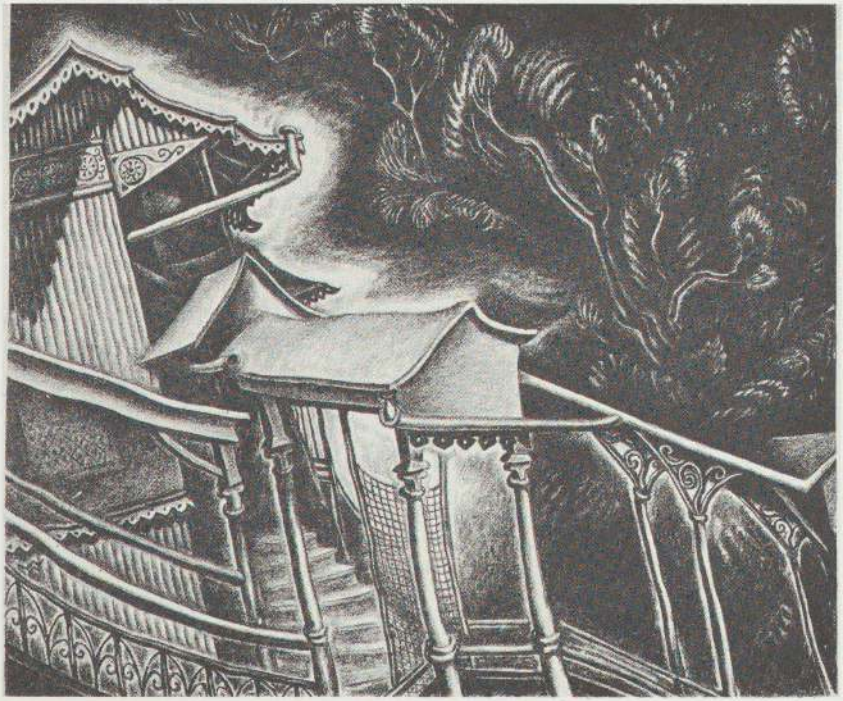


STEFAN HIRSCH. American, born 1899. *Central Park*. 1930.
Lithograph, 8⅝ x 12⅝ inches. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.



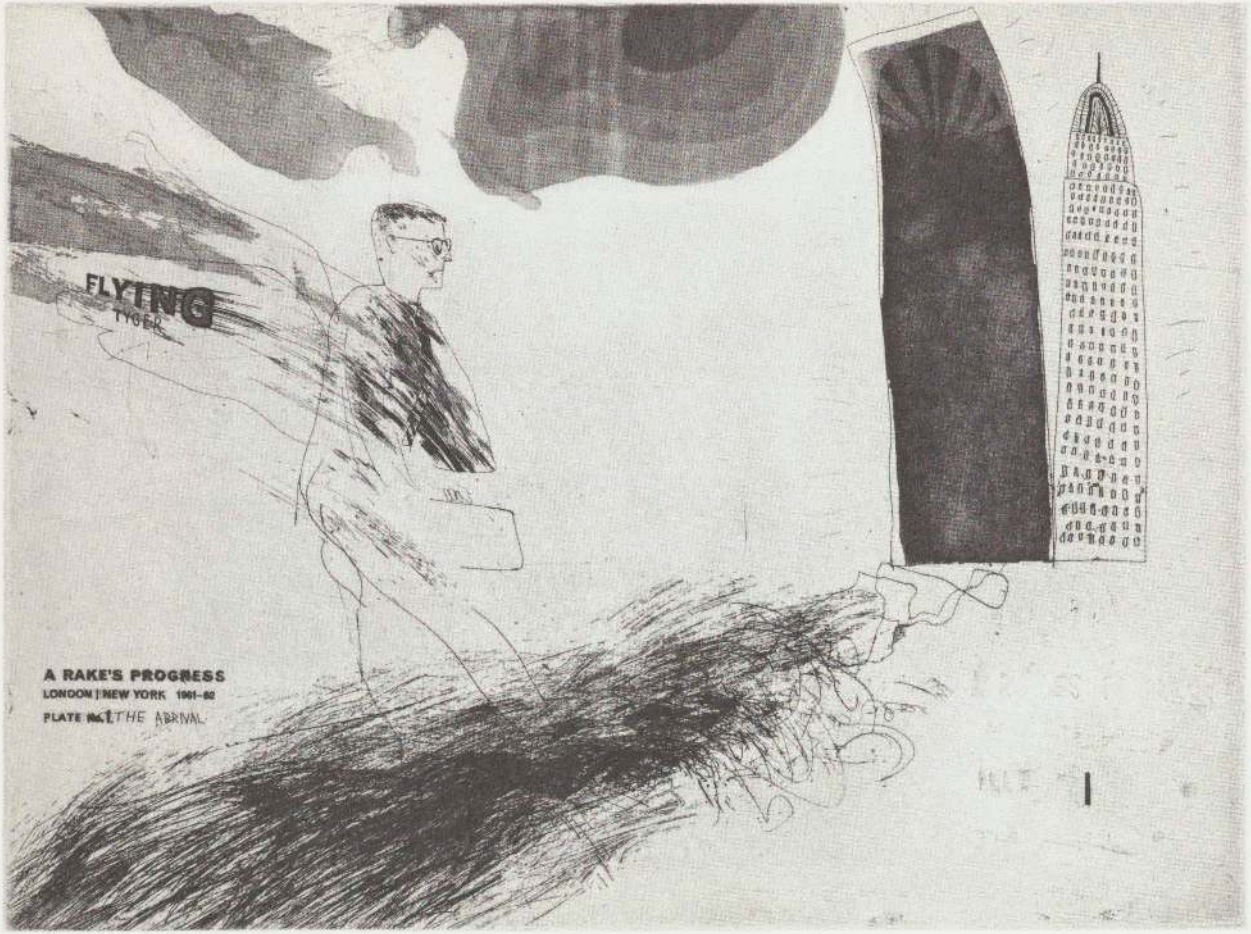
GLENN O. COLEMAN. American, 1887-1932. *Election Night.* 1928.
Lithograph, 12⅛ x 16⅞ inches. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.

JOSE CLEMENTE OROZCO. Mexican, 1883-1949. *Vaudeville in Harlem.* (1929).
Lithograph, 11⅞ x 15⅞ inches. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.

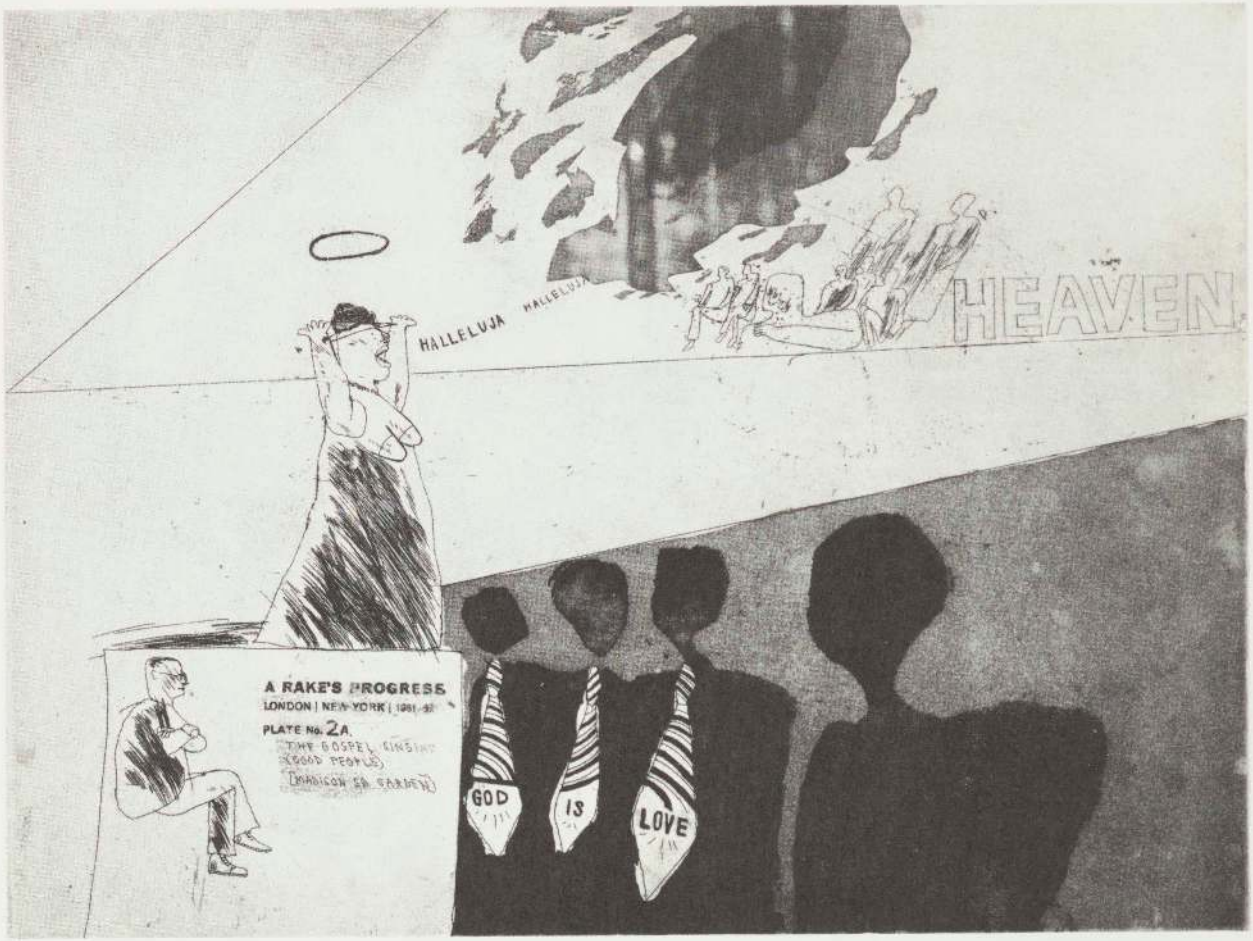


WANDA GAG. American, 1893-1946. *Elevated Station.* (1925).
Lithograph, 13⅜ x 15⅞ inches. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund.

ADOLF DEHN. American, born 1895. *"Die Walküre" at the Met.* 1930.
Lithograph, 13½ x 17⅞ inches. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.



DAVID HOCKNEY. British, born 1937. *The Arrival*, from "A Rake's Progress, London/New York," a suite of 16 prints. Published 1963.
Color etching and aquatint, 15¾ x 19⅜ inches. Mrs. Alfred R. Stern Fund.



DAVID HOCKNEY. *The Gospel Singing (Good People), Madison Square Garden,*
from "A Rake's Progress, London/New York."
Color etching and aquatint, 15¾ x 19⅜ inches. Mrs. Alfred R. Stern Fund.

Opposite: OSCAR KOKOSCHKA. British, born Austria 1886. *Manhattan I*,
from the portfolio "Manhattan 1967."
Published 1967. Lithograph, 22 x 25¼ inches. Adriane Reggie Fund.