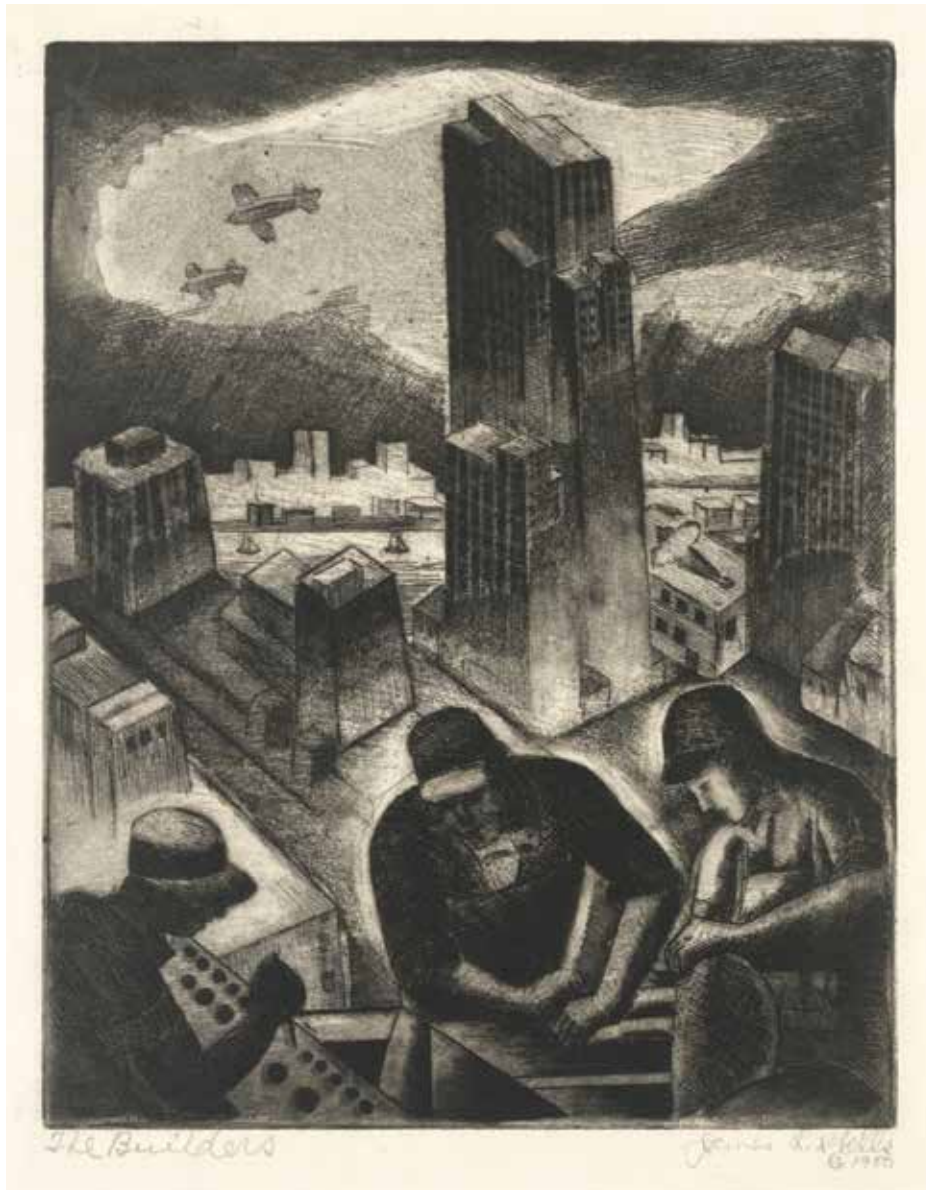


THE CITY

ART AND THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT



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CURATED BY

Angelique Acevedo '19

Sidney Caccioppoli '21

Abigail Coakley '20

Chris Condon '18

Alyssa DiMaria '19

Carolyn Hauk '21

Lucas Kiesel '20

Noa Leibson '20

Erin O'Brien '19

Elise Quick '21

Sara Rinehart '19

Emily Roush '21

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

Prof. Shannon Egan

The City: Art and the Urban Environment is the fifth annual exhibition curated by students enrolled in the Art History Methods class. This exhibition draws on the students' newly developed expertise in art-historical methodologies and provides an opportunity for sustained research and an engaged curatorial experience. Working with a selection of paintings, prints, and photographs, students Angelique Acevedo '19, Sidney Caccioppoli '21, Abigail Coakley '20, Chris Condon '18, Alyssa DiMaria '19, Carolyn Hauk '21, Lucas Kiesel '20, Noa Leibson '20, Erin O'Brien '19, Elise Quick '21, Sara Rinehart '19, and Emily Roush '21 carefully consider depictions of the urban environment in relation to significant social, economic, artistic, and aesthetic developments.

At the end of the nineteenth century, no city was perhaps more important in the art world than Paris. In looking closely at Giovanni Mataloni's *Incandescenza A Gas*, a poster distributed in France as part of Jules Chéret's *Les Maîtres de l’Affiche (The Masters of the Poster)* series, Abigail Coakley '20 explains how posters during the *Belle Époque* became a recognized art form and an emblem of increased commercialization. Sarah Rinehart '19 also researches a poster that decidedly is a work of art, but one that challenges conventions, discrimination, and inequities in art institutions and in art history. In their work titled *Do Women Still Have to Be Naked to Get into the Met. Museum?*, the Guerrilla Girls, a collective of feminist activist artists, compared the number of nude male bodies to nude female bodies depicted in works of art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This so-called “weenie count” not only acknowledges the prevalence of female nudity in art history, and as illustrated in Mataloni's print, but also the cultural power that the Metropolitan Museum, and New York more broadly, holds as a major venue in the art world.

Angelique Acevedo '19, Sidney Caccioppoli '21, Alyssa DiMaria '19, and Noa Leibson '20 consider New York in the late 1920s and through the 1930s, a period of intense architectural and social changes. The contributions of prominent African-American artists, James VanDerZee and James Lesesne Wells, active during the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro Movement are the subjects of Angelique's and Noa's research. Both artists depict, and indeed celebrate, African-American workers in this decade. Angelique's analysis of VanDerZee's elegant portrait of a secretary resonates, both in subject and in their loftier message of racial uplift, with Noa's essay on Wells' *The Builders*, a complicated composition of three figures balanced somewhat precariously high above the city skyline. In contrast to Wells's elevated workers, the two poor newsboys in Minna Citron's *Grist for the Mill* are seated on the ground. Pressed against the corner of an imposing urban building, the boys represent Citron's concern for the lowest classes in the city. Alyssa's essay specifically identifies Citron's intent to juxtapose the stories of the wealthy reported in the papers with the plight of New York City's newsboys. Sidney articulates how Berenice Abbott's photograph documents New York's transformation from a relatively quaint nineteenth-century city to a booming, industrial metropolis of skyscrapers.

New York City again is depicted in works of art examined by Lucas Kiesel '20, Emily Roush '21, and Elise Quick '21. In her essay on Mavis Pusey, an accomplished African-American artist, Emily profoundly compares the abstract depiction of a seated figure with VanDerZee's photograph *Secretary*, mentioned above. Emily argues that Pusey's abstract composition reflects the artist's interest in the rhythms and tempo of the city. In both Pusey's and VanDerZee's works, one can imagine the worker, typing percussively at desk, contributing to the sounds of this urban composition. In studying William Clutz's pastel drawing titled *Toward St. Johns*, Lucas describes how the artist conveys the particularities of light and shadow in city streets. The abstraction of Clutz's sky is offset by the remarkable naturalism of the gleams and reflections on the car windows and building facades. Thirty years after Clutz's drawing was created, a devastating hurricane struck New York City. Contemporary artist Amer Kobaslija responded to this deadly storm in his series of paintings of Staten Island. Elise rightly compares the destruction of the hurricane's effects on the city with the aftermath of war, particularly as experienced by the artist during the Bosnian civil war. Kobaslija's identification of what he sees as the “confluence of natural disaster and human falling” addresses the larger causes and consequences of climate change, political violence, and the ensuing catastrophes.

Photographs of the First and Second World Wars, researched carefully by Carolyn Hauk '21 and Chris Condon '18, specifically address the calamitous effects of war to which Kobaslija alludes. Australian photographer Frank Hurley's almost cinematic photographs of France during World War I provide a compositional order and a compelling perspective of the unfathomable losses seen during this war. Chris asserts that Hurley's photographs of city streets, industrial machinery, and mountains of architectural rubble can be interpreted as an effort to somehow control and make sense of the surrounding chaos. In the following World War, American soldier Albert Chance, stationed in Italy, likewise attempted to translate his wartime experiences into photographs. From an extraordinarily large collection of photographs, Carolyn selected several photographic prints that reveal Chance's keen juxtapositions of Italy's historical past with a powerful military presence. Like Hurley, Chance acknowledges the destructive effects of war in dense urban areas; pedestrians stroll past shops and ruins, as a zeppelin hovers, tanks roll in, and buildings crumble.

The students' essays in this catalogue present sensitive and thoughtful reflections on a wide variety of research subjects and consider a range of art-historical methodologies. Their excellent work was enthusiastically encouraged and supported by faculty and administrators at Gettysburg College. I owe sincere thanks to Carolyn Sautter, Director of Special Collections and College Archives, Sydney Gush, and Catherine Perry, for their willing assistance, insightful suggestions, and ready availability throughout all stages of this exhibition. I am grateful for the engaged and sustained research instruction of Kerri Odess-Harnish. Her individual meetings with and mentorship of the students resulted in well-researched projects and a heightened awareness of information literacy.

This exhibition would not have been possible without the generosity of our donors to the collection. The remarkable works by James VanDerZee and James Lesesne Wells were purchased with funding from the Michael J. Birkner '72 and Robin Wagner Art and Photography Acquisition Fund. Generous contributions from Dr. Deborah Smith P'11, P'13 also made these acquisitions possible. Dr. Smith, an incredible champion of the expansion of our collection of African-American art, also loaned the print by Mavis Pusey from her private collection for our students to study. Major gifts of paintings and drawings from the artists, William Clutz and Amer Kobaslija, are extraordinary additions to the collection and reflect both artists' incredibly profound and successful careers as active, prolific painters and special friends to Gettysburg College. We are grateful to other individuals and institutions for their donations, including the Guerrilla Girls, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Thomas '47 and Virginia '47 Cinton, and Barbara Chance Hall. Special thanks are also owed to Dr. Barbara McNulty, Director of the Suzanne H. Arnold Art Gallery at Lebanon Valley College, for the loan of Berenice Abbott's photograph; I am always appreciative of Dr. McNulty's encouragement of student learning across institutions and her endless commitment to collaboration. It is always wonderful working with graphic designer Ayumi Yasuda, and I am grateful for the tireless work and dedication of Leslie Casteel, Academic Administrative Assistant for Schmucker Art Gallery.

The James Weaver '64 Fund for Creative Teaching and the Department of Art and Art History at Gettysburg College have also provided generous support. Finally, it has been a remarkable pleasure teaching the Art History Methods course this semester. The class embraced the topic and the challenges of this curatorial project with open-minded enthusiasm, and I express my pride and appreciation for my students' diligent research, determined efforts in writing, and refreshing intellectual curiosity.

Shannon Egan, PhD
Director, Schmucker Art Gallery



James VanDerZee
(American, 1886–1983)

Secretary

1929

silver print

9.5 x 7.5 in.

Purchase made possible by the Michael Birkner '72 and Robin Wagner Art and Photography Acquisition Fund, with additional support provided by Dr. Deborah Smith P'11, P'13

Gettysburg College Fine Arts Collection
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ANGELIQUE ACEVEDO '19

Highly respected African American photographer James VanDerZee frequently photographed middle-class and upper class black sitters in the 1920s and 1930s in New York City. Not only do his beautiful photographs of well-dressed sitters in Harlem combat the prevalence of negative stereotypes of the black community, his positive representations also specifically align with the ideologies and discourse of the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro Movement. These historical and cultural movements promoted the integration and celebration of black identity and culture.

In this photograph, VanDerZee depicts an educated, financially stable, and a working class black woman. This figure is highlighted beautifully with dramatic contrast in light and shadows in order to present her as a well dressed, educated, and self-assured professional. The positive portrayal of this woman reflects what artist and art historian Deborah Willis describes as the “pride and achievement” of the New Negro Movement.¹ At the time this photograph was taken, the black community was still enduring intense racial discrimination, which had begun with colonization and the enslavement of black people. The Harlem Renaissance promoted the beauty, intellect, and varied artistic production of the black community. Poet Langston Hughes explained, “We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too.”² Similarly, VanDerZee's portraits of upperclass black individuals assert the beauty and dignity of his sitters. In contrast to negative images of black people, VanDerZee depicts individuals as successful, respectable professionals who contribute to society, and he creates a platform for this community to receive the recognition they deserve. VanDerZee's photographs capture many moments of black success including portraits of champion boxers, college graduates, and a fur-coat wearing couple exiting a car in New York City.

Because the secretary represented here is black and also a woman, one can imagine that she experienced discrimination towards both her ethnicity and gender. During the 1920s, efforts were made by the NAACP, which was founded in New York City, to provide black women with equal opportunity to receive well-paying jobs. This woman is not presented in a domestic scene, but is featured and perhaps celebrated for her professional status. Seated at a shiny new typewriter, the woman, with carefully styled hair, wears a pressed, silk shirt and a pearl necklace. This photograph reflects the successful fight of black women for their equal rights within the work place. At a time when black women were not deemed eligible for most professional work positions, including some factory jobs, her role as a secretary is even more remarkable. It is important to remember that, even though women were present within the workplace, they were often subjected to inferior occupations. The possibility of women being recognized as professional workers owes a debt to the Women's Rights Movement and the struggle to end inequalities and discrimination toward women.

VanDerZee's photography does not only celebrate black culture and identity, but also creates a space for black figures and black artists within art. Knowing that the art world has been long dominated by Western culture and ideologies, VanDerZee's own identity and that of his subjects challenges many art historical and societal conventions. *Secretary* promotes a positive image of a professional black woman and reflects a pivotal moment in American history when black women were included and represented in the urban workforce. This artwork serves as documented evidence of a transitional stage within New York City, promotes the inclusion of black identity, and celebrates new opportunities for the black community.

1. Deborah Willis, *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers, 1840 to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), x.

2. Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” *The Nation* (1926); http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_L/hughes/mountain.htm.

SIDNEY CACCIOPOLI '21

In *Murray Hill Hotel*, prominent American photographer Berenice Abbott contrasts multiple architectural styles to reflect issues about socioeconomic differences in the city. As part of her larger project titled *Changing New York*, this photograph reveals her interest in the effects of a rapidly changing urban environment. The photographs featured in the book are city scenes from the 1930s.

Abbott had a particularly ambitious vision for *Changing New York*. Despite the publishers' decision to assert control over final selections of images and the writing of captions, Abbott nonetheless documented a transforming city. For instance, she often juxtaposes nineteenth- and twentieth-century architecture to illustrate this transition and modernization. After a few years in New York, Abbott spent most of the 1920s living in Paris before starting this project in 1929. Abbott was inspired not only by the cities, but also by other artists and photographers she met and worked with including Man Ray and Eugène Atget. During her time in Paris, she was most influenced by Atget, who documented the architecture and streets of Paris. Specifically, Atget photographed the Hausmannization of Paris, a time when Baron Hausmann oversaw major urban development in Paris, such as the creation of wide boulevards and large apartment buildings. These changes in layout and design largely benefitted the wealthy over the poor. Atget's photographs were intended to document old Paris as it was being demolished and turned into a new city and eventually inspired Abbott to pay closer attention to the architecture of old and new New York into her own photographs. Upon her return to New York City, Abbott found the city to be drastically different, nothing like what she had left behind eight years earlier. By juxtaposing the old and new of the city, she therefore questions what the city is becoming and how these changes define the lives of the upper and lower classes during the Great Depression.

In *Changing New York*, Abbott specifically asks, "What is the city? How shall it live in the eyes of the future?" and "How shall the two-dimensional print in black and white suggest the flux of activity of the metropolis, the interaction of human beings and solid architectural constructions, all impinging upon each other in time?"¹ Abbott describes how the architecture of the city affects the class divides and reflects the city's economic status. For example, in *Murray Hill Hotel*, the building in the foreground is contrasted with the Chrysler building almost hidden in the background on the upper right hand side. Abbott's composition focuses on architecture and how it reflects the city's growth and development as it changes. Abbott is especially interested in the temporal dynamism of New York; her photograph reflects a sense of the past as well as what the city will become in the future.

In *Murray Hill Hotel* the viewer is placed on the street looking up, giving the impression that the buildings, which for the moment are seemingly static, might soon give way to a changing skyline. She captures a moment in time that encourages the viewer to also consider the past, present, and future of the city, in other words, how a city retains its identity but is always redefined. Like many of the other works in the exhibition, Abbott is largely concerned with the always changing social and economic development of the city.

1. Terri Weissman, *The Realisms of Berenice Abbott: Documentary Photography and Political Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press; Washington, D.C.: Phillips Collection, 2011), 123.



Berenice Abbott
(American, 1898–1991)

Murray Hill Hotel

1935

silver gelatin print

9.5 x 7.5 in.

Gift of Suzanne H. (Arnold) Schrotberger,
on loan from The Suzanne H. Arnold Art
Gallery, Lebanon Valley College



Giovanni Mataloni

(Italian, 1869–1944)

Incandescenza A Gas

Les Maitres de l’Affiche (Plate #072),
Issue 18, May 1897

Originally published by Italian Cartographic
Institute, Rome, 1895

chromolithograph

41 x 51 cm

Gift of Geoffrey Jackson '91

Gettysburg College Fine Arts Collection
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ABIGAIL COAKLEY '20

In the late nineteenth century, posters were considered a novel form of advertisement that transformed the aesthetic of European city streets. Industrialization and urbanization consolidated people into these urban centers of production and exchange. Companies had to increase their advertising efforts to appeal to new urban consumers and make their products more visible. Large, bright, eye-catching posters soon covered every surface in Paris, with some journalists estimating that millions of posters were put up in the city each year.¹ Posters were a medium for the modern world and the influx of them in densely populated European cities was a tangible symbol of commerce and modernity.

French printmaker Jules Chéret, who pioneered this new, colorful printing style, is considered the father of the modern artistic poster. His work coincided with Haussmannization, Baron Haussmann's urban overhaul that created wide streets and the multi-storied, elegantly decorated architecture of Paris. In the aftermath of this major redesign, Chéret's posters, and those of his contemporaries, were a vibrant, multicolored explosion in what nineteenth-century Parisians saw as a monotonous and drab city.² Chéret elevated poster art from a mere decorative, commercial art form to "high art," almost on par with the work of great painters and sculptors.

The popularity of posters in Europe peaked during the 1890s, the golden age of poster art. Exhibitions were created solely for poster art, and people collected them avidly. Chéret's printing company compiled a selection of over two hundred and fifty posters, including Giovanni Mataloni's *Incandescenza A Gas*, in a collection called *Les Maîtres de l’Affiche*, "The Masters of the Poster." These works were printed in a reduced size and distributed as part of an inexpensive subscription to satisfy collectors.³

Mataloni's poster is an advertisement for the incandescent mantle, known in Italian as the "Brevetto Auer." Invented in 1885 by Carl Auer von Welsbach, the mantle was a symbol of modernity and technological advancement.⁴ Gas streetlights were a common fixture in nineteenth-century European cities and made increased activities for business and entertainment possible after dark. The smiling figure on the poster gestures to a floating gas mantle surrounded by a halo of light.

This poster reflects the Art Nouveau style, an artistic movement that became prominent in the nineteenth century alongside the poster format. Art Nouveau is inherently linked to ideas of newness, an expression of the modern spirit and social climate.⁵ The style is characterized by twisting organic forms and detailed opulence. Mataloni, however, deliberately

inverts some of these natural forms into man-made ones to suit the subject matter of his poster. The vine-like tendrils of the border are not plants, but rather the plumbing that operated gaslights; the gas flames along the top of the image evoke the shapes of flowers blooming along a stem. A sunflower, usually associated with the natural light of the sun, is positioned to face the beaming, sun-like corona around the gas mantle.

The figure on the poster is sensually posed and nude, save for a sheer slip, an exploitation of the female form that was typical in both Art Nouveau style and in poster advertisements of the time. As the conventions of modesty were changing and pornography was becoming more widely available, the Art Nouveau movement reflected a fascination with the sexual and erotic as a representation of modernity.⁶ Mataloni's *Incandescenza A Gas* is a snapshot of modern life in a nineteenth-century city. It embodies urbanization and commercialization, technological innovation, and changes in artistic style and convention. The poster illustrates the ever-advancing progression of modernity.

Incandescenza A Gas, and related advertisements for the incandescent mantle inspired twentieth-century avant-garde artist Marcel Duchamp's final work, *Étant Donnés*, created in secret over a span of twenty years before his death in 1968. Similar in subject to Mataloni's poster, Duchamp's provocative diorama features the nude figure of a woman holding a gas mantle.⁷ Scholars acknowledge that Duchamp undeniably would have seen this poster, perhaps with French rather than Italian text, in his youth in France.⁸ Although Mataloni's poster captures the innovations of the late nineteenth century, Duchamp's work is a testament to the enduring nature of its imagery.

1. Karen L. Carter, "The Spectatorship of the *Affiche Illustrée* and the Modern City of Paris, 1880–1900" *Journal of Design History* Vol. 25, No. 1 (2012): 12.

2. John Barnicoat, *A Concise History of Posters: 1870–1970* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1972), 12.

3. Ruth E. Iskin, *The Poster: Art, Advertising, Design, and Collecting, 1860s–1900s* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2014), 146–7.

4. Ara Kebapcioglu, "W for When the Welsbach Burner Went Weird and Wet," *PUBLIC* Vol. 28, Issue 56 (October 2017): 168.

5. Barnicoat, 29.

6. Ghilaine Wood, *Art Nouveau and the Erotic* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 2000), 7–9.

7. Kebapcioglu, 169.

8. Barnicoat, 200.

CHRIS CONDON '18

Compelling artworks, like diamonds, are often created under pressure. A meticulously planned conflict, the First World War was thought of by many across the globe as a struggle that would cast aside the mayhem of the past. However, as in any other conflict, the order striven for by the powerful is often overshadowed by the tumult of war. Australian photographer Frank Hurley juxtaposed elements of order and chaos on the front to emphasize this contradiction's importance to civilian audiences. His diverse environments allowed the artist to incorporate elements of modernity and tradition in his photographic narrative.

At the height of the First World War, the Australian government hired Frank Hurley to photograph not just the battles of the Western Front, but activities of soldiers behind the lines. Already renowned for his travels as a photographer on the famous Shackleton Expedition to the South Pole, Hurley's artistic sentiments and photographic storytelling capability resurfaced in his first European assignment.¹ Unlike many other contemporaneous war photographers, Hurley's training as a commercial photographer and his previous experience as an adventurer uniquely prepared him to imbue his work with an unprecedented level of emotion. This insight bolstered his capacity to create a compelling account of the War through images of his surroundings that move beyond pure documentary photography.

Among the dozens of photographs in this album are four that reinforce Hurley's desire to document both tangible and intangible themes of war. In *Taking Up Supplies*, the artist pairs compositional clarity with the photograph's context of physical destruction. Cargo trucks likely carry supplies to the front lines, while the damaged trees and ruined buildings across the rest of the photograph evoke the destruction wrought by the conflict. Wandering soldiers across the center of the image also prompt a bleak outlook, as the viewer is left to contemplate their role within the scene and how they individually experience the War in the context of a gray, hazy backdrop. On the same page, Hurley eschews the perspectival clarity of *Taking Up Supplies* to create a more hectic composition in *A Motor-Bike Used to Supply Power for Generating Electricity*. Situated on top of a prominent pile of rubble in the center of the composition is a soldier whose bottom half is concealed by the motorcycle described in the title. This photograph places wreckage at the foot of surviving architecture and, because of this overwhelming disarray, underscores the theme of order and chaos through the contrast of structure and ruin.

The photographs on the opposite page provide the viewer with a similar sense of the War's inherent contradictions. In *London Buses Used as Transports*, the urban devastation of the conflict is most eminently exhibited. While the background features the damaged remains of an unknown European town and the middle ground depicts soldiers being shuttled through the scene, the prominent crucifix in the foreground prompts the viewer to consider the role of spirituality in the conflict, and the existential nature of the struggle befalling the soldiers in the center. This spiritual dilemma contrasts with the earthly nature of the destruction on display in the remainder of the composition. The urban scene of *London Buses* contrasts with *An Open-Air Paddock*, which exemplifies the peculiarly rural dimension of the First World War. As tools for combat and transportation, horses were used by each belligerent nation at points throughout the War, which is especially curious when one considers the quagmires of trench warfare and the industrially advanced nature of the conflict.² In a sense, this photograph emphasizes the evolutionary and contradictory nature of the First World War in the most tangible way, placing an element of the past so close to the vehicles of the present.

The progression of industrial technology was an essential feature of the First World War. Although Hurley was trained in the art of photography at the close of the nineteenth century, his experience on the Western Front drove him to wrestle with societal transformation in the twentieth century. This experience was not unlike that of the belligerents as a whole, with each realizing the terrible potential of the developments that they had so readily embraced throughout the industrial revolution. As urbanization intensified to meet the demand for industrial labor, they felt the strain of war through both the momentous material sacrifice they endured and the damage inflicted by the technologies of the early twentieth century. As an artist, Hurley carefully composes his images to not only document a conflict as it unfolds, but also to convey to his audience the transformative nature of industry and conflict. Photography, used by others in a purely anthropological fashion, here allows this artist to craft a powerful visual narrative.³

1. Alasdair McGregor, *Frank Hurley: A Photographer's Life* (Camberwell, Vic: Viking, 2004), 87.

2. John Ellis, *Cavalry: The History of Mounted Warfare* (Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2004), 174-176.

3. Robert Dixon, "Where Are the Dead? Spiritualism, Photography, and the Great War," *History of Photography* 28, no. 3 (2004): 247.



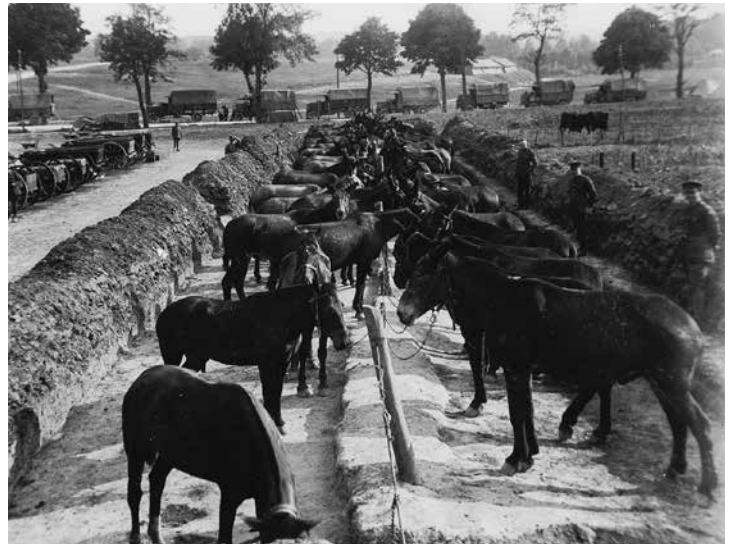
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4

Frank Hurley
(Australian, 1885–1962)

- 1. Taking up Supplies**
- 2. A Motor-Bike Used to Supply Power for Generating Electricity**
- 3. London Buses Used as Transports**
- 4. An Open-Air Paddock**

1917–1918

photographs

6 x 8 in. each

Gettysburg College

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ALYSSA DIMARIA '19

American artist Minna Citron was born in New Jersey and raised in Brooklyn, New York. She became most well-known for her abstract paintings and prints in the early to mid-twentieth century. Citron's initial aim was to create works of art that extensively tested the boundaries of social and cultural norms in New York City during the Great Depression. As a social realist, she was drawn to everyday scenes in the city, specifically poor young boys. As seen here in her 1934 painting, *Grist for the Mill* illustrates two young boys captivated by the newspapers they are selling.

Citron spent every day in the city witnessing and studying people wherever she went. Citron's paintings can be seen as subtle commentary about society and her perspective on contemporary cultural and societal issues. Her work rivals that of better known social realists engaged in similar interests such as Raphael Soyer and Isabel Bishop.¹ Every detail in Citron's *Grist for the Mill* reflects her position on social, cultural, and political issues in the 1930s. The newsboys, one sitting on the sidewalk and the other on top of a stack of newspapers, are clearly impoverished. Each boy wears a jacket that is too big with holes and patches, as well as tattered knickers, and ratty, oversized, untied shoes. Most strikingly, one boy's surprised facial expression reflects the shocking content of his newspaper.

Citron also decided to make specific pages of the papers' content legible to the viewer. The newspapers, then, must be seen as central as the two boys reading them. These papers explain current issues and events including the lowering of baseball icon Babe Ruth's salary. Compared to the boys' paltry income, this headline underscores their tragic social status. The bold headline "Child Slayer" is printed on the newspaper on the right and is the focal point of the painting. This headline refers to the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby and the tragic sense of loss and danger felt by all social classes. Both headlines refer to real news events in the midst of the Great Depression.

Citron's principle interest in her works is the juxtaposition of classes. The upper class is represented through headlines and the lower classes are personified by the newsboys. Lastly, Citron does not simply depict the challenges of two young boys captivated by the newspapers they are trying to sell; rather, her painting can be seen as a sincere recognition of socio-economic inequities in the city.

1. Jennifer Streb, "Minna Citron: A Socio-Historical Study of an Artist's Feminist Social Realism in the 1930s," PhD dissertation (Penn State University, 2004).



Minna Citron
(American, 1896 – 1991)

Grist for the Mill

1934

acrylic on masonite

29.5 x 33 in.

Gift of Thomas '47 and Virginia '47 Citron

Gettysburg College Fine Arts Collection

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1



2

Albert Chance
(American, 1903–1990)

**1. Pisa—US Navy Blimp
Over Leaning Tower**

**2. Naples—Street Off
Via Roma**

3. Street in Foggia

**4. Florence—Ruins of
Buildings Blown Up
by Germans Along
Arno River Near
Ponte Vecchio.**

1944–1945

photographs

4.5 x 2.75 in. each

Gift of Barbara Chance Hall

Gettysburg College

Special Collections and College Archives



3



4

CAROLYN HAUK '21

Albert Chance, an American soldier serving in the Allies' Mediterranean Campaign in World War II, photographed, as a personal record, Italy's urban centers during this time of social, political, and economic turmoil.¹ Chance fervently chronicled his wartime experience, and the select photographs on display portray the struggles of modernizing Italy, a country ill-prepared for war. Amongst them are images of tourist attractions juxtaposed with symbols of modern warfare, street scenes revealing economic disparities, and the aftermath of war in major Italian cities.

At Pisa, Chance photographs the famous *campanile*—otherwise known as the “Leaning Tower of Pisa”—with a U.S. Naval zeppelin suspended next to it. The *campanile* is not centered in the photograph, but its defining slant guides the viewer's eye towards the zeppelin which is also angled towards the tower. Chance's photograph has a sense of clarity in its reduced composition to three central, geometric elements—the tower, the blimp, and the ground plane. If the viewer looks closely, one might notice the crowd that gazes at the blimp in fear and bewilderment as American soldiers occupy the grounds. The contrast between a Renaissance tower and a zeppelin emphasizes the differences between the Old World and New—a Renaissance past and a modern future. This photograph also serves as a reminder that Italian cities, living museums, could potentially be destroyed by the proximity of World War II.

Chance's street scenes in Naples and Foggia show his compositional interest in capturing the image with the camera's perspective pointing down a road. This photograph taken in Naples depicts a narrow ally perpendicular to Via Roma. Immediately, the viewer's eye is drawn to the blurred passersby in the foreground, suggesting dynamic motion and transience in this busy scene. As the viewer's gaze follows the vanishing point, one sees shoppers, business owners, and other pedestrians including a dog (*un piccolo cane*) walk by. Light streaming down the street blurs the balconies and upper stories of the buildings. Unlike this modern street in Naples, Chance's photograph of Foggia depicts a more residential and lower-class neighborhood. Both of these photographs reflect a similar transition to modernization and demonstrate the economic differences in its urban centers.

Whereas the street in Naples depicted a modernized city, the street scene in Foggia is a reminder of the cities struck with poverty as a result of World War I as well as the cities that clung to old, Italian lifestyles.

In another photograph of the destroyed bridges along the Arno in Florence, Chance demonstrates the destruction of modern warfare on Italy's cities. The crowd of people moves from the foreground to middle ground. The eye follows the march of civilians, winding through mountains of debris and rubble along the obliterated railroad tracks parallel to the crowd. A closer view of the photograph reveals civilians rummaging through the mountains of rubble and the people marching in the line carry all of their worldly possessions. Traces of modernity such as the railroad tracks, the bicycles, and industrial ruin are strewn throughout the destruction. Unlike Chance's other photographs, this image depicts the devastation in Italy's urban settings—a consequence of total warfare.

Chance does not depict scenes of terror, violence, and death; rather, he captured images of Italian cities contextualized in a time of war. Though he was an amateur photographer, he represents an era of photography determined to capture the brutalities of war in the hopes of turning around a world prone to warfare. And yet, some of Chance's photographs do not allude to brutality at all. These photographs, intended for personal memory, serve as archives of Italy's struggles to modernize and grow while also honoring its past. Chance saw just as much trauma in the day-to-day streets of Foggia as he did in the demolished streets of Florence, and he captured the conflict of Italy's traditional cities at a time when everything in the world was changing.

1. Barbara Chance Hall, “Biography,” Albert Chance World War II Collection, Special Collections and College Archives, Musselman Library, Gettysburg College.

LUCAS KIESEL '20

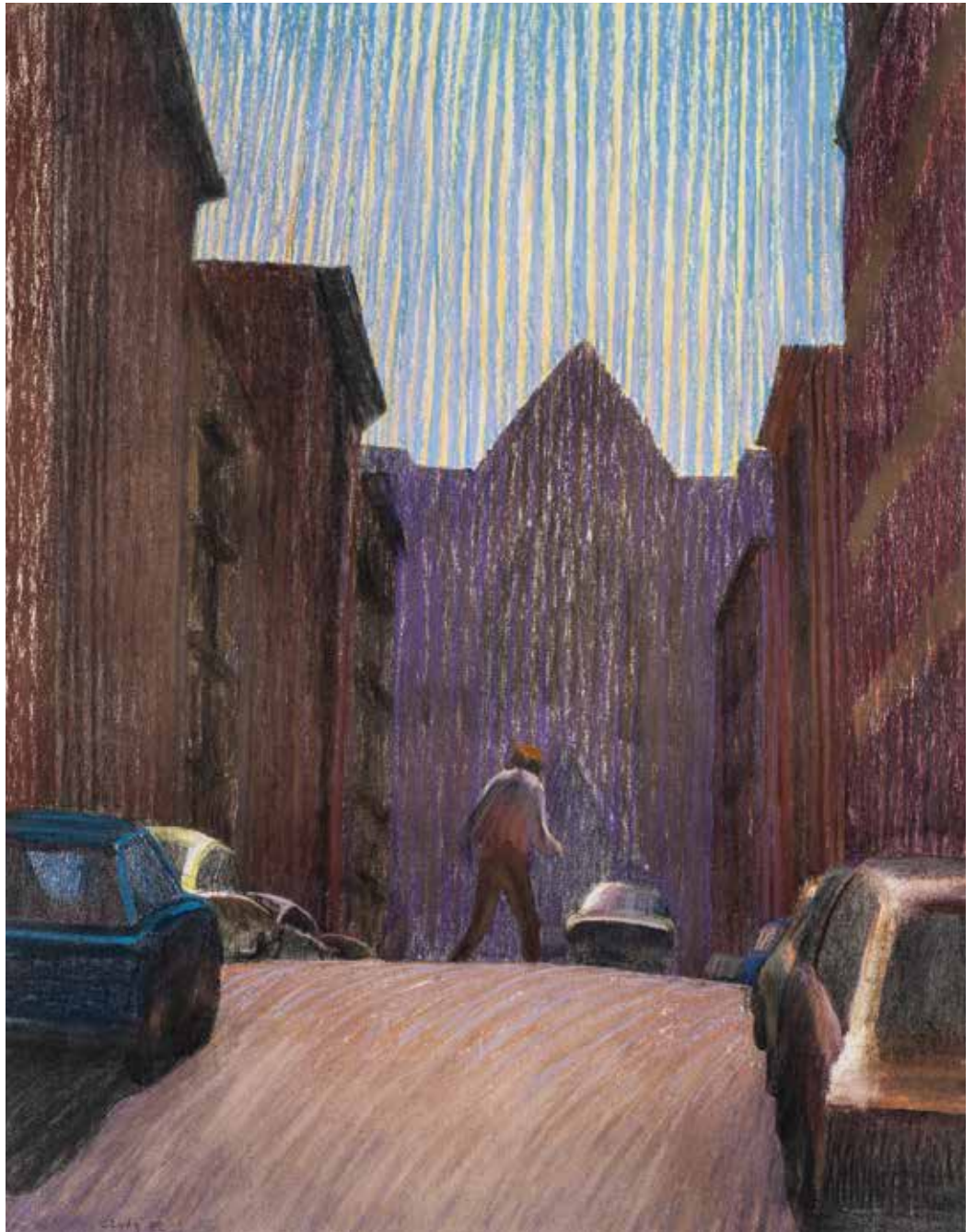
When William Clutz moved to New York City in 1955, he immediately started drawing and painting locations near his home on East 9th St. and Tompkins Square. He would often sit on a park bench and sketch people in their daily routines.¹ In addition to keenly observing the scenery in front of him, Clutz took inspiration from other artists, such as Nicholas de Stael and Arshile Gorky. In his early years as an artist, Clutz briefly produced paintings that responded directly to Abstract Expressionism, because this movement was still prevalent during the 1950s.² Clutz soon moved away from abstraction and towards the subject matter of American Realism, an art style that depicted the daily routines of seemingly ordinary people. He was particularly inspired by the goings-on in New York City and balanced an abstract style with recognizable figures and architecture of the city. Clutz was also drawn to the effects of natural light on different components of the city, such as cars, buildings and people. For instance, in Clutz's pastel drawing titled *Towards St. Johns*, the artist conveys the atmospheric impressions of natural light by displaying non-local, bright colors in unexpected places. For example, the cathedral located at the center of the background shows streaks of purple, blue, yellow, light green, brown, red, and grey. Through linear abstraction, Clutz suggests that these colors appear as the natural sunlight reflects the cathedral's stained-glass windows. This visualization of how certain surfaces react to sunlight based on their color, material and other objects reflects the particular quality of light in narrow New York City streets.

Additionally, Clutz's method of drawing light connects all the separate items within the artwork to one another, forming one coherent landscape since the lines never break. Clutz portrays light with straight lines of color, thus displaying how light naturally changes based on its relation to surrounding objects. These solid lines are also characteristic of his work in pastels.

The depiction of the figure in the foreground is also somewhat abstracted, as he faces the cathedral in the background and appears to be crossing the street, likely moving towards the building, as the title would imply. This figure likely serves as a stand-in for the viewer and invites a deeper, more embodied connection with the artwork. The placement of the abstracted figure puts the viewer in the middle of the city streets, allowing for a slightly strange viewing experience because the perspective is shifted from the original angle. The street's hill-like incline propels the figure upwards. Rather than creating a scene from strictly a third-person perspective, Clutz proposes a second outlook by inviting the viewer to imagine what it would be like to occupy this figure's position. The drawing reflects the larger theme of the exhibition; Clutz's *Toward St. Johns* emphasizes an aesthetic and thematic connectedness among buildings, cars, and pedestrians in the city.

1. Stephen Polcari, "Abstract Expressionism: New and Improved," *Art Journal*, vol. 47 no. 3 (1988): 174-176.

2. Janice C. Oresman, *William Clutz: New Pastels, Chicago and Los Angeles* (New York: Tatistcheff and Co., 1984).



William Clutz
(American, b. 1933)

Toward St. John

1982

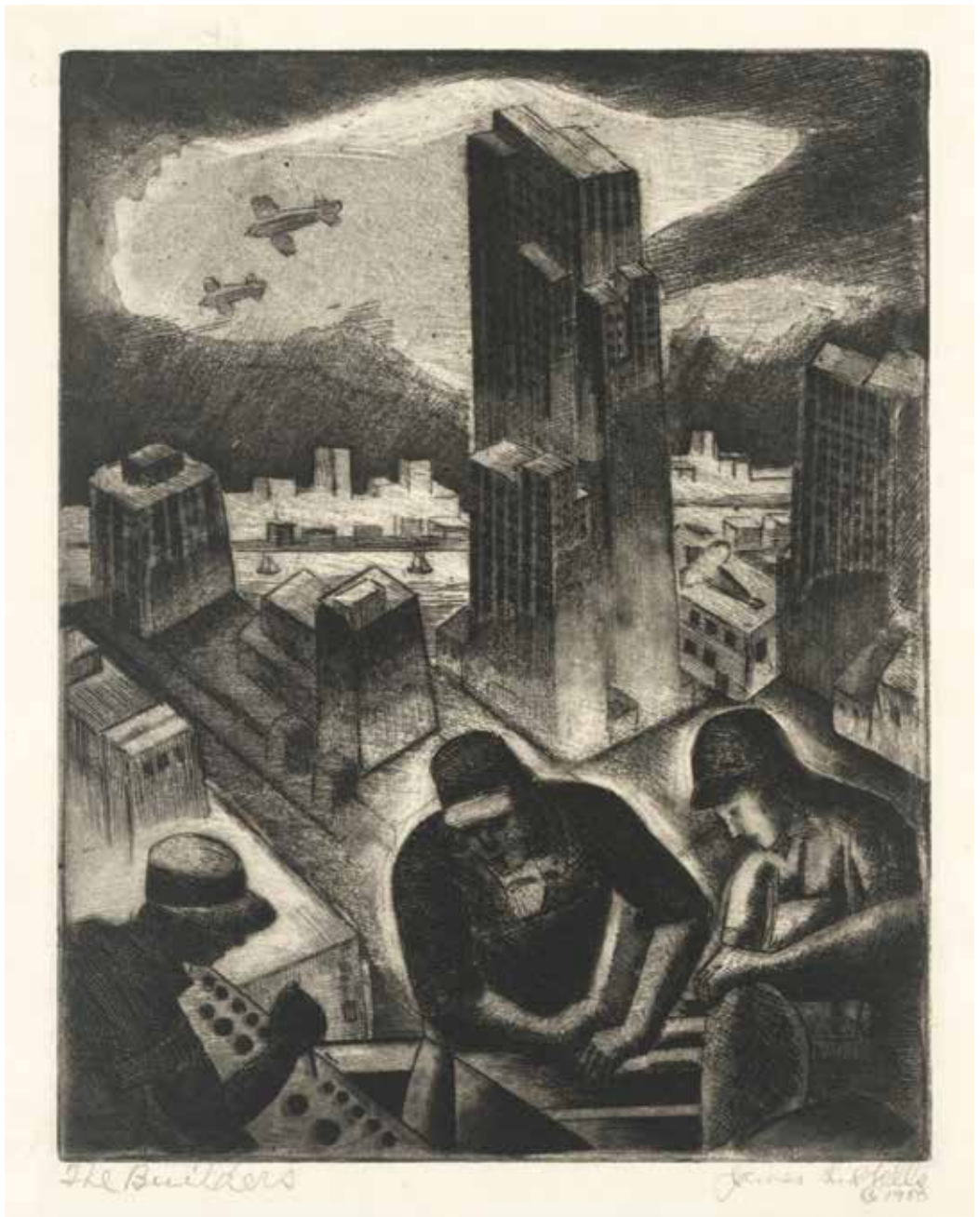
pastel on paper

35.5 x 29.25 in.

Gift of the artist

Gettysburg College Fine Arts Collection

Special Collections and College Archives



James Lesesne Wells
(American, 1902–1993)

The Builders

c. 1938, signed and dated 1950
etching on cream laid paper
8 x 10 in.

Purchase made possible by the Michael Birkner '72 and Robin Wagner Art and Photography Acquisition Fund, with additional support provided by Dr. Deborah Smith P'11, P'13

Gettysburg College Fine Arts Collection
Special Collections and College Archives

NOA LEIBSON '20

James Lesesne Wells first dipped his toes in the art world when he visited the public museums of New York City. As a young boy, the African-American artist was enamored with the works on display and sketched the coveted Old Masters. This ritual was Wells' daily escape from his day job working as a porter. Trying his best to diligently copy the paintings, visitors in the same rooms would compliment his work and say he had made academic paintings into a modern idiom.¹ Their comments anticipated Wells' professional career with his later modernist works, as seen here in the engraving titled *The Builders*. This print was originally completed in 1938, and it presents a Harlem landscape, Wells' beloved neighborhood when he lived in New York during the height of the Harlem Renaissance.

Wells presents three laborers hard at work atop a skyscraper in Harlem, the vast skyline behind them revealing more buildings in New York City. A cloud hovers over the skyscrapers and is pierced by two fighter-jets overhead. The two planes are framed by the white left behind, and another jet is visible from atop a smaller building in the middleground, a seemingly odd and impossible location for a plane to land. At the time *The Builders* was made, political tensions were rising worldwide, and the impending World War would soon begin. The planes foreshadow the impending unrest, but the subject of the engraving suggests issues closer to home. The viewer is positioned slightly above the figures who ignore the jets, but the other horizons do not connect and appear distorted. Although Wells developed his skills studying artists like the engraving master Albrecht Dürer, he also was inspired by abstraction and modernism and looked carefully at African sculpture and German Expressionist prints.

Wells grew as an artist during the Harlem Renaissance, and *The Builders* reflects the celebration and optimism of that time. Even though the engraving was first made in 1938, a year that was still reeling from the Great Depression, Harlem was experiencing a housing demand.² Harlem was diverse and represented a haven for those experiencing discrimination and injustice. The Harlem Renaissance promoted equality

and expression that had been unjustly denied in social and political circles. The persistence of black creators in all artistic fields was celebrated and unprecedented. What started in Harlem eventually spread nationwide, and during this period writing, poetry, music, and art converged in their message of racial uplift. This creative expression gave the black population more agency in their fight for civil rights, but that didn't mean their struggles were over or that white patronage during the Harlem Renaissance was not problematic.³ Wells' himself was a target of attacks from white supremacists; a burning cross once was put upon his door.

In spite of these threats, Wells was committed to making art and uplifting his community. After winning awards and commissions during the Harlem Renaissance, Wells accepted a teaching position at Howard University in Washington, D.C.; even though the city could not rival the artistic vibrancy in New York, Wells wanted to give other blacks the opportunity to study art. This concern for accessibility also motivated Wells' chosen medium of printmaking, for it allowed art to be reproduced and thus be more widely available for all audiences, particularly African Americans who may have been barred from viewing or owning fine art.⁴ Ultimately, works like *The Builders* assert the principles of the Harlem Renaissance and Wells' own desire for African Americans to have a sense of belonging in a hostile world. In Wells's community, these figures are lifted as high as the clouds and are building America, *their* America, for everyone in the future.

1. Richard Powell, *James Lesesne Wells: Sixty Years in Art* (Artisan Printing, 1986), 7–9.

2. Toure F. Reed, *Not Alms but Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910–1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 169–90.

3. Cheryl A. Wall, *The Harlem Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2016.) 1–22

4. "James L. Wells," *Callaloo* 39, no. 5 (2016): 1061–1146.

ERIN O'BRIEN '19

In 1907 the luxurious Plaza Hotel, located on 5th Avenue at Central Park South in New York City, opened its doors to the wealthiest individuals in the world. Throughout the twentieth century, the Plaza was known for hosting the most notable celebrities, musicians, actors and businesspeople. The National Parks Service named the Plaza a National Historic Landmark in 1986, the same year that famed American artist Andy Warhol photographed the exterior of the hotel.

Warhol came from humble beginnings; he was the child of immigrants and grew up idolizing the rich and famous.¹ Warhol moved to New York City in 1949 to embark on a career in the arts. Almost instantly, Warhol became a successful commercial artist. By the 1960s, Warhol's Pop Art reflected an interest in mass consumer culture; he utilized bright colors and silkscreen printing to approach issues of celebrity and current events. During the height of his Pop Art career, Warhol created his most recognizable paintings including *Marilyn* (1967) and *Double Elvis* (1964). As seen with his prolific production of Polaroids and portraits, Warhol's obsession with the celebrity would continue throughout his career.

By the 1980s, Warhol became increasingly active as a photographer, and his interest in fame and American culture remained. According to Art Historian Arthur C. Danto, "[Warhol] represented the world that Americans lived in by holding up a mirror to it, so they could see themselves in its reflection."² Polaroids, photographs and film became his chosen medium. In the last decade of Warhol's life, he frequently walked along the city streets, bringing a camera and many rolls of film with him wherever he went. He took approximately 100,000 photographs during this time.³ The result of this photography explosion was spontaneous and random images of New York City, including photographs of buildings, petroleum trucks, storefronts, cars on the street, Central Park and building signs, many of which now belong to Gettysburg College's collection.⁴

Warhol's photograph of the Plaza Hotel is not of a celebrity, of course, but of a historic landmark. The hotel towers over the street, as if its high-end guests look down, out their penthouse windows, on the pedestrians passing by during their day-to-day routines. The photograph is deliberate in its intentions while maintaining a seemingly random sense of perspective. The hotel is at a skewed angle, and the Mercedes sedan and busses drive by in blurry motion. The aesthetic of the photograph makes his method of walking along the street continually snapping photographs apparent.

Warhol's photograph also alludes to the importance of a social hierarchy and his own quest for fame in New York City. With its exclusive status, the Plaza acts as the celebrity of the composition. The passing of busses 2355 and 2335 in the bottom of the image provide a clear contrast between the upper classes who occupy the Plaza Hotel and the passengers on the busses. Although at first glance, this photograph appears to have been simply a snapshot, Warhol's work specifically comments on the differences between social classes in the city. In comparison to the other photographs by Warhol in Gettysburg College's collection, *Buildings* is one of the only images to allude to the elite crowds in New York. While these photographs of New York may seem starkly different from the bright, loud, and mesmerizing Pop Art paintings, the black and white prints of New York City show a complex social history of life in the hustle and bustle of America's largest city.

1. Andy Warhol and Christopher Heinrich, *Andy Warhol Photography* (Thalwil/Zürich: Edition Stemmlé, 1999), 41.

2. Arthur C. Danto, *Andy Warhol* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 126.

3. Stephen Petersen, "I Am a Camera," *Art Journal* 60, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): accessed September 20, 2018, doi:10.2307/778143, 110.

4. Andy Warhol, *America* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1985).



Andy Warhol
(American, 1928–1977)

Buildings

c.1986

black and white print

8 x 10 in.

Gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Andy Warhol Photographic Legacy Program.

Gettysburg College Fine Arts Collection

Special Collections and College Archives

Image ©The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

Amer Kobaslija

(Born Bosnia and
Herzegovina, 1975)

Kissan Ave, Oakwood Beach, October 28

2013

oil on paper

23 x 31 in.

Gift of the artist

Gettysburg College Fine Arts Collection

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ELISE QUICK '21

Kissam Ave, Oakwood Beach, October 28 by Amer Kobaslija depicts the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy on Staten Island, New York. The sun has set over the shambles of buildings. Among the wreckage of wood panels, roofing and house siding, there are a few distinct objects, such as two bicycles and an air conditioning unit. The foreground of the painting shows the sheer magnitude of the storm and demonstrates how densely populated cities display the scale of destruction wreaked by natural disasters.

Kobaslija often incorporates interesting angles and viewpoints in his paintings, and here he provides three different versions of linear and aerial perspective. For instance, because one can clearly see the houses in the background, the illusion is one of looking down from a two-story building. The viewer is also eye-level with the main piles of debris in the middle of the painting. But, the right side, with the yellow building, is elevated on top of a pile of wood scraps; the viewer looks upward at the whole structure. These shifts in vision reflect the chaos of the hurricane. Moreover, the use of perspectives alludes to the multiple experiences of victims of this storm.

Kobaslija sees that the way a storm can wipe out a whole city is similar in some ways to the devastation of war. Kobaslija makes connections between natural disaster and human made disasters explaining, "I could not help but draw parallels between the human-caused destruction in the land of my ancestors and the ongoing catastrophe, with its confluence of natural disaster and human failing."¹ Kobaslija relates his memories of the war in Bosnia during his childhood in the early 1990s to the destruction of the hurricane. Kobaslija is drawn to chaos; he sees the aesthetic beauty that can exist in the midst of horrific tragedy.

Kobaslija was born in Bosnia in 1975 and grew up there until 1993. Due to the Bosnian civil war, Kobaslija left and moved to Germany.² In 1995 he became a guest student at Kunstakademie in Dusseldorf, Germany, and received his Masters in fine arts at Montclair State University in New Jersey in 2005. He has had a successful and prolific career as an artist and professor, teaching at Gettysburg College from 2010 to 2018.

In *Kissam Ave, Oakwood Beach*, Kobaslija tells the story of how the destruction of a storm can affect a city. Hurricane Sandy hit the Eastern coast of the United States in October of 2012 and was the most detrimental storm the United States had seen to date. Winds exceeded over 100 miles an hour, three times as much as any typical hurricane. There were 152 total deaths, 6500 patients evacuated from hospitals and nursing homes, and two million ended up without power. The total cost of damages was recorded at 19 billion dollars just in New York alone.³ The urban density of New York exacerbated the losses caused by flooding. 88,700 buildings were damaged, and almost all of the city's infrastructure was flooded. Since the area is so populated and condensed, one building collapsing affects another.

Kissam Ave, Oakwood Beach depicts the devastation and the rubble of the homes that were once there. Kobaslija recounted in dense, painterly strokes the traumatic events of the storm, memorializing it into a complicated, abstract, dense web that viewers are both drawn to and repulsed by, because it is horrific and beautiful all at once. The painting also reminds the viewer that even though it was a natural disaster, climate change has intensified storms. Kobaslija painted the aftermath of the storm as an area that is complicated, yet beautiful in the devastation. He depicts a landscape that is dense with the materiality of chaos and translates the detritus of the storm into individualized brush strokes and brilliantly thick layers of color.

1. Edward M. Gomez, "Of History, Disasters, and Paint" *Amer Kobaslija* (New York: George Adams Gallery, 2015), 49-55.

2. Bo Hutton, "Young Bosnian to Hang in Cumber," *Florida Times Union*, 1998.

3. *Sandy and Its Impacts: A Local Perspective: Hearing before the Committee on Environment and Public Works, United States Senate, One Hundred Twelfth Congress, Second Session, November 29, 2012* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2017).

SARA RINEHART '19

The feminist art activist collective the Guerrilla Girls, founded in the 1980s but still active today, addresses issues of gender and race inequality in their work. In their offset lithograph *Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?* the Guerrilla Girls target the politics and practices of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the most prominent art museum in New York City, the so-called “art capital of the world.” In criticizing the Metropolitan Museum, the largest art museum in the United States, the Guerrilla Girls identify this museum as representative of the biases of art institutions more broadly.

In 1989, the Guerrilla Girls compared the number of male and female nude paintings as well as the number of male and female artists shown in the Metropolitan Museum and published the results in this poster *Do women have to be naked?*¹ They found that “less than 5% of artists in the Modern art sections are women, but 85% of the nudes are female.” This statistic, paired with the provocative question, calls attention to both the attention given to men over women artists and the prevalence of the female nude in art. This poster, featuring bold lettering with the dynamic, contrasting color palette black, yellow, and red, was displayed on city streets and bus routes, and so extended the significance of the museum space to the city of New York as a center of meaning-making for art.² By situating their work in the urban space of New York City, the group challenged the assumption of the museum as the only repository for relevant art and as the defining space where objects become art. Marginalized artists, such as women and people of color, were underrepresented in what was on display at the Met Museum. The Guerrilla Girls called explicitly for changes in how art institutions should reflect the realities of a diverse population.

The poster *Do women have to be naked* marks a postmodernist crossover between social activism and artistic production for the Guerrilla Girls.³ Postmodernism blurs the distinction between fine and popular culture, emphasizes the concept behind a work over its formal qualities, and

challenges long-standing conventions of the art world. Similarly, this poster is intended for mass production and mass consumption. The Guerrilla Girls' specific iconography refers to French neoclassicist Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres's *Grande Odalisque* in order to criticize the trope of the active male creator and passive female subject that is objectified and sexualized. The distorted body proportions, such as the female figure's elongated spine and hyper-rotated pelvis, with the compositional emphasis on these strongly swooping diagonal lines in Ingres's *Odalisque*, emphasize the unrealistic, ideal feminine subject. The figure's gorilla mask, a signature symbol for the group that members wear for the sake of anonymity, disrupts the *Odalisque's* gaze that invited the viewer to objectify the female body. Instead, the gorilla head redirects the viewer's eye towards the activist text.

The mask also provides a humorous pun for “guerilla,” a term typically used to describe particularly atrocious warfare. Although the Guerrilla Girls are decidedly non-violent, they employ “ambush” tactics in their protest art; the group fights systemic racism and sexism by displaying numerous posters at museum exhibition openings and art auctions to identify discriminatory collectors, artists, and art institutions with carefully collected statistics.⁴ In addition to wearing gorilla masks, the members take on the names of dead women artists. The Guerrilla Girls signed this poster with their pseudonyms, including Mexican surrealist painter Frida Kahlo, the name often taken by the leader of the collective, with the specific message to the Gettysburg College Art Department to “make trrrrrrouble!”⁵ Ultimately, the group intends to spread their social activism and art ideals to art institutions, including Gettysburg College. Although the statistics for women artists have not improved significantly, some institutions targeted by the Guerrilla Girls responded positively to the criticism.⁶ Through their persistent socio-political activism, the Guerrilla Girls opened the dialogue on issues of institutionalized discrimination in the art world, thus propelling progressive changes in culture and artistic representation in New York City.

Guerrilla Girls (founded 1985)

Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?

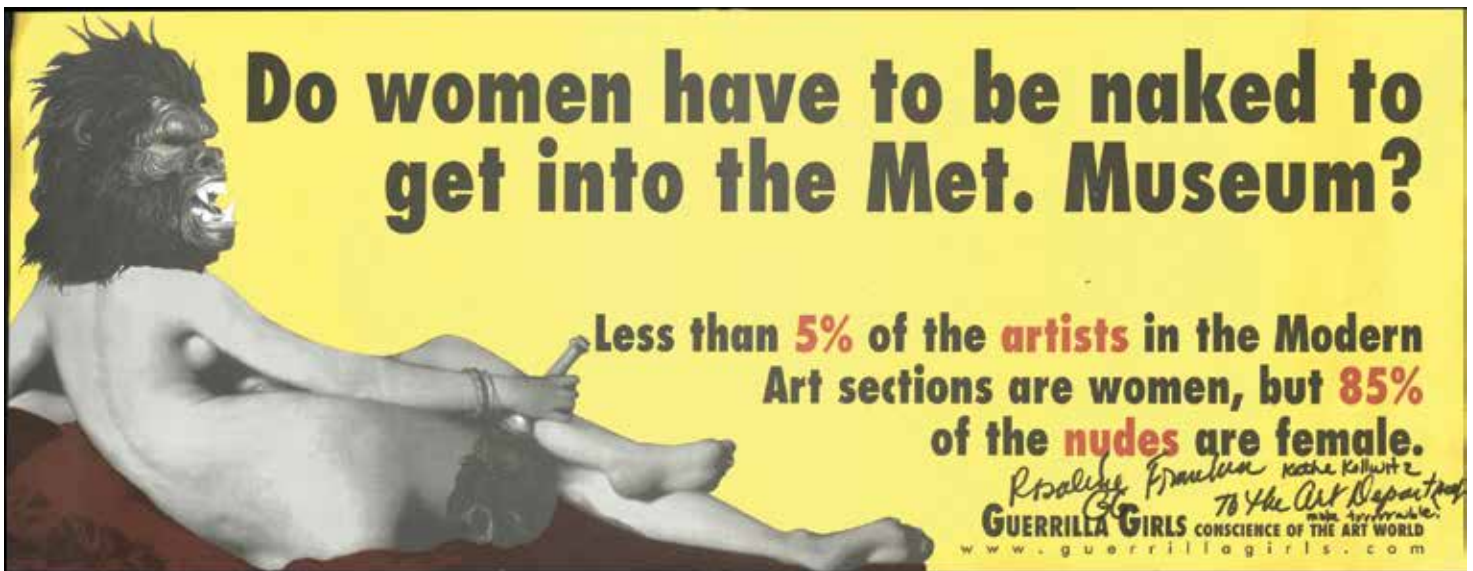
c. 1991

offset lithograph

Gift of the artists

Gettysburg College Fine Arts Collection

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1. Guerrilla Girls, *Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls: How a Bunch of Masked Avengers Fight Sexism Racism in the Art World* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995), 61.

2. Ibid.

3. Ralph F. Young, ed. *Make Art Not War: Political Protest Posters from the Twentieth Century* (New York: Washington Mews Books, an Imprint of New York University Press, 2016), 1–12.

4. Anna C. Chave, "The Guerrilla Girls Reckoning," *Art Journal* 70, no. 2 (2011): 108.

5. Guerrilla Girls, *Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls*, 13.

6. The Guerrilla Girls criticized director Tom Krens for the all-male Guggenheim exhibition in 1992, which prompted his inclusion of the token woman French-American artist Louise Bourgeois. To the Guerrilla Girls, this showed a certain amount of "self-monitoring" and increased "consciousness." Chave, "The Guerrilla Girls Reckoning," 110. The Guerrilla Girls did a recount of the number of male and female nudes and male and female artists at the Met Museum in 2012 and found that the statistics had changed so that "Less than 4% of artists in the Modern Art Section art women, but 76% of the nudes are female." The Met museum decreased the number of women artists they were exhibiting, but increased the number of male nudes. Kahlo, Frida and Kathe Kollwitz, "Transgressive Techniques of the Guerrilla Girls," *Getty Research Journal* 2 (2010): 204.

EMILY ROUSH '21

Mavis Pusey's lithograph *Untitled (Abstract Composition)* vividly stands out among the more literal representations of the urban environment in this exhibition. In this print, sharp geometrical shapes and bright primary colors evoke a sense of the city's energy. Pusey, an African American artist whose style is characterized by both hard-edged abstraction and Cubist influences, has dedicated her long and prominent career to depicting the experience of the city.

When first looking at *Untitled (Abstract Composition)*, one may question why this work is included in a city-themed exhibition. Despite the clear geometric abstraction in the composition, Pusey depicts a figure shown in profile sitting at a desk. Amidst the crisp, bright colors, this composition does not literally illustrate urban architecture or streetscapes, but rather suggests the atmosphere of the city as a site of industry and work. Pusey explains, "My work consists of geometrical forms in a variety of geometrical configurations. These forms are based on buildings around the Manhattan area. I am inspired by the energy and the beat of the construction—the tempo and movement mold into a synthesis for me, become another aesthetic of abstraction."¹ Although the geometric shapes in this print may not depict architecture, Pusey creates a figure that fits into the city. Every line in the print is sharp and conforms to the principles of hard-edged abstraction. A thick black curved line defines the head of the figure and a solid black rectangle suggests a torso; the body is situated against a background of flat red, curvilinear forms. Rectangles of light blue and yellow reinforce Pusey's interest in visual rhythm and tempo.

Pusey's studied at the Arts Students League in New York City under prominent artist Will Barnet and worked in Robert Blackburn's print shop.² Here in New York, she developed her abstract aesthetic and took the city as her muse. As an African American woman engaged with abstraction, Pusey's work has often been overlooked, but she was included in the museum exhibitions *Magnetic Fields* at the National Museum

for Women in the Arts in Washington, DC and *Contemporary Black Artists in America* at the Whitney Museum in New York to celebrate artists of color. A common thread between the two exhibitions is the issue of how black artists working in abstraction are marginalized more than representational artists. When black artists use abstraction, art historian Eric Dzierdzic explains this as, "failure to engage with artists' lived experience."³ In other words, African American artists were expected to create representational works that clearly illustrated their identities. With Pusey, her abstract aesthetic, in addition to her race and gender, made it more difficult to become recognized. For instance, prominent African Artist Jacob Lawrence also abstracted his figures amidst flat planes of color, but Pusey's work is decidedly more non-objective.

Untitled (Abstract Composition) represents the modernity and energy of the city. Pusey purposefully uses geometric forms with crisp lines, to celebrate an urban worker. This lithograph resonates with James VerDerZee's photograph titled *Secretary*, as seen on page 4 in this catalogue. Each of these works feature similar subjects of the worker, but in obviously different media. This connection illustrates how the theme of the city can be embodied through different interpretations and styles. *Untitled (Abstract Composition)* in this exhibition raises appreciation for African American women artists, like Pusey, who translate their lived experiences in the city into compelling abstraction.

1. "The Artwork of Mavis Pusey," n.d., accessed 20 September 2018, <http://www.mavispusey.com/index.html>.

2. "Mavis Pusey Biography," *The Annex Galleries*, n.d., accessed 20 September 2018, <https://www.annexgalleries.com/artists/biography/1923/Pusey/Mavis>.

3. Eric Dzierdzic, et al., *Magnetic Fields: Expanding American Abstraction 1960s to Today*, (Missouri: Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, 2017), 18.



Mavis Pusey
(American, born in
Jamaica, 1928)

Untitled (Abstract Composition)

1964

lithograph

20 x 15.5 in.

On loan from Dr. Deborah M. Smith P'11, P'13

THE CITY

ART AND THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

DECEMBER 5, 2018 - MARCH 8, 2019

GALLERY TALKS: December 6, noon

RECEPTION: December 7, 4:30 – 6:30 pm

CURATED BY

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Sidney Caccioppoli '21	Carolyn Hauk '21	Elise Quick '21
Abigail Coakley '20	Lucas Kiesel '20	Sara Rinehart '19
Chris Condon '18	Noa Leibson '20	Emily Roush '21

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Design by Ayumi Yasuda

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for Creative Teaching and the Department of Art and Art History,
Gettysburg College.

Cover Image: James Lesesne Wells (American, 1902–1992), *Builders*, c. 1938,
signed and dated 1950, etching on cream laid paper, 8 x 10 in.

Purchase made possible by the Michael Birkner '72 and Robin Wagner Art and
Photography Acquisition Fund, with additional support provided by Dr. Deborah
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