

# MERCURY GALLERY

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Prelude: Music in Art  
at Mercury Gallery Boston  
May 2 – 25, 2005



Louis Schanker, *Musical Companion*, 1938, color woodcut print, 5 x 16.5"

Mercury Gallery  
8 Newbury Street, 2nd Floor • Boston, MA 02116  
[www.mercurygallery.com](http://www.mercurygallery.com)  
617.859.0054



# LOUIS SCHANKER

MODERNIST DRAWINGS AND PRINTS, 1937 TO 1955

SHOWN IN HONOR OF THE REINSTALLATION OF THE ARTIST'S WPA MURAL  
FOR WNYC AT THE NEW YORK CITY MUNICIPAL BUILDING

APRIL 2 THROUGH MAY 21, 2005

SUSAN TELLER GALLERY

568 BROADWAY • ROOM 103A • NEW YORK, NY 10012 • 212 941-7335



## LOUIS SCHANKER (1903-1981)

This exhibition is held in honor of the reinstallation of the *WNYC Mural*, 1939, made by Louis Schanker for the New York City radio station. It is located on the 25th floor of the Municipal Building, 1 Centre Street North at Chambers Street.

A native New Yorker, Louis Schanker was a teenager when he left school to join the circus. In 1920 he returned to New York and studied at Cooper Union, the Art Students League, and the Educational Alliance School of Art. In 1931/33 he travelled and studied in France and Spain, and in 1933 he had his first one-man show. By 1935 Schanker made his first woodcut, finding the medium, and establishing a pattern of experimentation, that would figure prominently throughout his career.

Schanker was on the mural division of the New York Works Progress Administration. He made a mural for the lobby of the WNYC radio station at the New York City Municipal Building, and for the Science and Health Building at the New York World's Fair, 1939.

He also served on the WPA printmaking project where he was a supervisor of the relief printing division. In 1935/36 he exhibited with The Ten Whitney Dissenters\* who showed their work at galleries in New York and Paris. He was a member of the American Artists Congress and a founding member of the American Abstract Artists group.

In 1943 Schanker began to teach at the New School for Social Research, NY, where he worked with Stanley William Hayter at the New York location of Atelier 17. In 1949 Schanker started to teach at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, where he stayed until his retirement.

In the 1940s and 50s works by Schanker were regularly included in the annual printmaking exhibitions of the Brooklyn Museum and were featured there in one-man shows in 1943 and 1974, as well as at the

Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1954/55, and Associated American Artists, NY, 1978 and 1986. In 1960 his work was included in the landmark 21 etchings and poems portfolio published by the Morris Gallery, NY.

Works by Schanker were included in the exhibitions *In Pursuit of Abstraction: American Prints 1930-1950*, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986; *the Patricia and Phillip Frost Collection: American Abstraction, 1930-1945*, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC, 1989; *A Spectrum of Innovation: Color in American Printmaking, 1890-1960*, and *The Second Wave: American Abstraction of the 1930s and 40s*, both at the Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts, 1991; *Images from the Federal Art Project*, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, 1996; and *FDR and the WPA Era: Art Across America*, Nassau County Museum, Roslyn Harbor, NY, August/October, 2004.

Here, at the Susan Teller Gallery, his work was shown in *Circa 1950*, December, 1991/January, 1992, *Contemplating Cubism*, October/November, 1995, *American Modernist Unique Works on Paper, 1924-1956*, January/March, 1997, *Louis Schanker, American Modernist*, March 31 through May 13, 2000, and this current exhibition, *Louis Schanker, Modernist Drawings and Prints, 1937 to 1955*, April 2 through May 21, 2005.

In addition to those institutions mentioned above, works by Louis Schanker are in the New York Public Library and Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Newark Museum; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Cincinnati Art Museum; Cleveland Museum of Art; Detroit Art Institute; Art Institute of Chicago; University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington; and the Library of Congress.

\*The Ten Whitney Dissenters were: Ben-Zion, Ilya Bolotowsky, Adolph Gottlieb, John Graham, Louis Harris, Earl Kerkam, Ralph M. Rosenborg, Marcus Rothkowitz (Mark Rothko), Louis Schanker, and Joseph Solman.



16. *Abstract Landscape*, 1945

## EXHIBITION LISTING:

The prints in this listing follow the order of the checklist, Louis Schanker, *Prints, 1924-1971*, with an essay by Una E. Johnson, Curator Emeritus, published by the Brooklyn Museum, 1974.

### 1. *Johnny on the Pony*, 1937/38

Mural study for children's dining room, for the Neponsit Children's Hospital, Rockaway Beach, Queens, NY.

Pencil drawing, sheet size 12 x 22 1/2 inches

### 2. *Johnny on the Pony*, 1938

Mural study for children's dining room, for the Neponsit Children's Hospital, Rockaway Beach, Queens, NY.

White gouache on black ink, sheet size 13 1/2 x 18 5/8 inches

### 3. (*Abstraction #3*), 1939

Gouache and ink, 4 x 5 5/8 inches  
Signed and dated in pencil.

### 4. (*Abstraction #9*), 1939

Gouache and ink, 4 x 7 1/4 inches  
Signed in pencil.

### 5. (*Abstraction #51*), 1939

Gouache and ink, 8 1/4 x 12 1/2 inches.  
Signed and dated in ink.

### 6. *Jai-Alai*, 1939

Brooklyn Museum 30, color woodcut  
Edition of 34, 10 x 13 7/8 inches

### 7. (*Abstraction*), about 1940

Monoprint, sheet size 12 1/4 x 17 1/4 inches  
Signed in pencil.

### 8. (*Abstraction #31*), about 1940

Gouache and ink, 12 x 16 inches

### 9. (*Abstraction #52*), 1941

Gouache and ink, 8 1/2 x 10 1/4 inches  
Signed and dated in ink.

### 10. (*Abstraction #26*), 1944

Gouache drawing, 14 1/4 x 22 inches  
Signed and dated in ink.

### 11. (*Abstraction #27*), 1944

Gouache drawing, 14 1/2 x 21 1/2 inches  
Signed and dated in ink.

### 12. (*Abstraction #28*), 1944

Gouache drawing,  
sheet size 15 1/4 x 22 3/4 inches  
Signed and dated in ink.



**13. (Abstraction #29), 1944**

Gouache drawing, 13 3/4 x 21 1/4 inches  
Signed and dated in ink.

**14. (Abstraction #30), 1944**

Gouache drawing, 21 1/4 x 14 1/4 inches  
Signed and dated in ink.

**15. Dance (also titled Indian Dance), 1944**

BM 62, color woodcut  
Edition of 25, 12 x 19 3/4 inches  
Signed, titled, dated, and numbered in pencil.

**16. Abstract Landscape, 1945**

BM 63, color woodcut  
Edition of 15, 14 x 31 inches  
Signed and numbered in pencil.

**17. Birds in Flight (II), 1946**

BM 93, color woodcut  
Edition of 27, 7 3/4 x 16 inches  
Signed, titled and numbered in pencil.

**18. (Abstraction #46), 1948**

Gouache and ink, 8 3/4 x 9 inches  
Signed and dated in pencil.

**19. (Abstract Figures), 1948**

Ink drawing, 7 1/4 x 10 1/4 inches  
Signed in ink.



7. (Abstraction), 1940



18. (Abstraction #46), 1948

**20. Variation, 1954**

Gouache and ink drawing,  
sheet size 12 x 16 1/4 inches  
Signed in ink.

**21. Variation II, 1954**

Gouache and ink drawing,  
sheet size 12 x 16 1/4 inches  
Signed in ink.

With a Grace Borgenicht gallery  
label on the reverse.

**22. Circle Image #5, 1954/55**

Color relief print  
Edition of 15, 19 3/4 x 25 3/4 inches  
Creases. Repaired tears in margin.  
Signed, titled, and numbered, in pencil.  
Also signed and titled to show work  
as vertical.

**23. Circle Image #25, 1954/55**

BM 121, color relief print  
Edition of 210, 14 x 18 inches  
Signed and titled in pencil.



23. *Circle Image #25*, 1954/55

# LOUIS SCHANKER

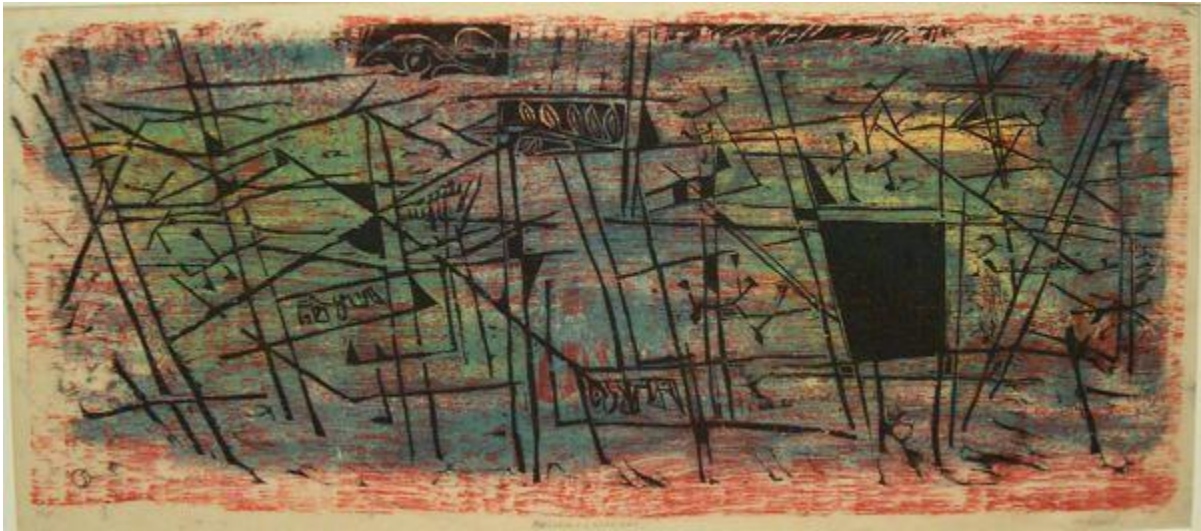
MODERNIST DRAWINGS AND PRINTS, 1937 TO 1955

SHOWN IN HONOR OF THE REINSTALLATION OF THE ARTIST'S WPA MURAL  
FOR WNYC AT THE NEW YORK CITY MUNICIPAL BUILDING

Images available at: [homepage.mac.com/stg568/Schanker/PhotoAlbum31.html](http://homepage.mac.com/stg568/Schanker/PhotoAlbum31.html)

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Louis Schanker (1903-1981)

29. Abstract Landscape, 1945

Brooklyn Museum 63 color woodcut

Edition of 15, 14 x 31 inches

Signed and numbered in pencil

## ARTISTS OF THE LEAGUE

PAINTINGS, PRINTS, AND UNIQUE WORKS ON PAPER  
SHOWN IN HONOR OF THE 130TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
ART STUDENTS LEAGUE

SEPTEMBER 16 THROUGH OCTOBER 22, 2005

SUSAN TELLER GALLERY

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Louis Schanker, *Aerial Act*

The Federal Art Project was a New Deal work relief program that hired 5,000 unemployed artists between 1935 and 1943. Commissioned artworks were displayed in public spaces including federal art centers, libraries, department stores, and even street corners. Murals were created in public schools, libraries, and hospitals. Artists produced 2,500 murals, 17,000 sculptures, 108,000 easel paintings, and 11,000 printing plates nationwide.

The Federal Art Project dissolved in 1943 when government funds were diverted to U.S. involvement in World War II. Artwork was distributed to tax-supported public institutions. The Queens Library received over 450 prints, drawings, paintings, and murals.

#### The New York City Graphic Division

Printmaking was considered a commercial medium, and was not a popular choice for fine art. The New York City Graphic Division changed this perception. Artists innovated new carving and printing methods that produced lithographs, woodcuts, and silkscreens with depth and modeling. Their prints looked like drawings and paintings, elevating the medium to fine art.

New York City printmakers also became advocates of the democratic potential of the medium. A print can be reproduced indefinitely, yet each print is an original work of art. With good distribution, they argued, art could reach the masses. The New York City Graphic Division was inspired to produce 125,000 prints from 5,500 original plates, more than all other Federal Art Project printmakers nationwide.

*Mindy Krazmien, Exhibitions Manager*



# MERCURY GALLERY — BOSTON —

## ENSEMBLE

Opening Reception: Saturday, December 3 from 5 to 7 pm



Phillip Jones



Carmen Jabaloyes



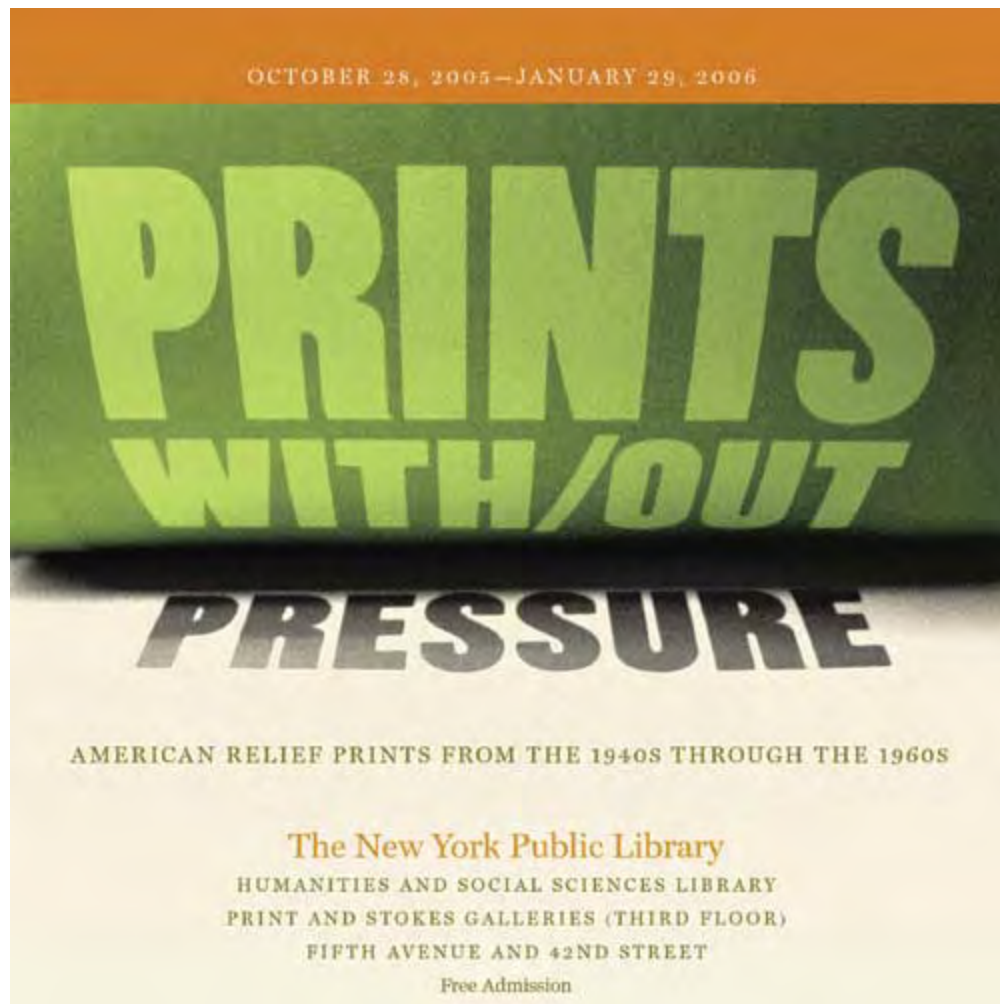
Louis Schanker



Anthony Moore

Mercury Gallery  
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[www.mercurygallery.com](http://www.mercurygallery.com)  
617-859-0054

Dec. 3-31, 2005



### Louis Schanker (American, 1903–1981)

Louis Schanker was a key figure in the resurgence of interest in the color relief print. As a technically innovative printmaker and as a teacher, he influenced many of the artists in this exhibition. Trained at Cooper Union, the Education Alliance, and the Art Students League, he made his first woodcut in 1935, a challenging seven-color print, which already reflected his appreciation for the School of Paris (he traveled abroad from 1931 to 1933), German Expressionism, and the Japanese woodcut. Though his early imagery was figurative, his work became increasingly abstract, concerned with Cubist distortions of form and space, realized with bright colors and tactile surfaces. While a member of the Graphic Arts Division of the Federal Art Project, and later the supervisor of color woodblock printing there, he developed new printing techniques. He layered oil-based inks on top of each other, often before the previous layer had dried, to realize dense, inky surfaces; he also printed colors over black ink, giving the colors a special luminosity. For a time Schanker shared a teaching studio at the New School with Stanley William Hayter, another passionate experimenter, though with intaglio processes. Schanker believed that “The possibility of invention ... is one of the most intriguing aspects of the woodcut.”

Louis Schanker (American, 1903–1981)

*Forms in Action*

Woodcut for Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project, 1941

Gift to The New York Public Library

Louis Schanker (American, 1903–1981)

*Indian Dance*

Color woodcut for Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project, 1941

Gift to The New York Public Library

Louis Schanker (American, 1903–1981)

*Skaters*

Color woodcut for Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project, 1941

Gift to The New York Public Library

Louis Schanker (American, 1903–1981)

*Static & Revolving*

Color woodcut, 1945–46

Norrie Fund, purchased from the artist

With this print, Schanker began a series of studies of circular movement. He explored variations on this image throughout the 1950s.



Louis Schanker (American, 1903–1981)

*Circle Image*

Color woodcut, issued by the International Graphic Arts Society (IGAS), 1952

Norrie Fund, purchased from the artist





## DEGREES OF DIFFERENCE

PAINTINGS AND WORKS ON PAPER FROM 1925 TO 1975  
INCLUDING VARIANTS, RELATED WORKS, AND PREPARATORY DRAWINGS

FEBRUARY 16 THROUGH APRIL 1, 2006



*Images available at:*  
[homepage.mac.com/stg568/Degrees/PhotoAlbum39.html](http://homepage.mac.com/stg568/Degrees/PhotoAlbum39.html)

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MERCURY GALLERY  
— BOSTON —

MERCURY GALLERY  
8 Newbury Street, 2nd Floor  
Boston, MA 02116  
617.859.0054

**Lyrical Abstraction**  
**Sculptures and Paintings by Louis Schanker**

April 22 – May 16, 2006

Opening Reception at Mercury Gallery Boston  
Saturday, April 22  
5 – 7 p.m.

[www.mercurygallery.com](http://www.mercurygallery.com)

FRONT IMAGE:

Louis Schanker (1903–1981). *Blue Abstraction*. 1933. oil on canvas. 35 x 27 inches

GALLERY HOURS: Monday – Saturday, 10 – 5:30



# Smithsonian American Art Museum

On view 2006-

4th Floor, Luce Foundation Center



## **Abstract Man**

1936 **Louis Schanker**

Born: New York, New York 1903 Died: 1981

carved and painted wood

22 x 4 3/4 x 5 in. (55.9 x 12.2 x 12.7 cm.)

Smithsonian American Art Museum

Gift of Patricia and Phillip Frost

1986.92.80

*Abstract Man* was carved during the 1930s, when Louis Schanker first began combining abstract shapes with figurative forms. The piece makes a connection between his graphic work and his carved sculptures. He translated the spirals, curves, and geometric shapes of his woodcuts into

three dimensions, creating a figure that evokes a primitive statue or a totem.

For more information about this work visit the [Luce Foundation Center](#).

# Smithsonian American Art Museum

on view 2006-

4th Floor, Luce Foundation Center



## **Black and White**

1964 **Louis Schanker**

Born: New York, New York 1903 Died: 1981  
wood: birch 25 1/4 x 11 3/8 x 10 7/8 in. (64.0  
x 28.8 x 27.6 cm.)

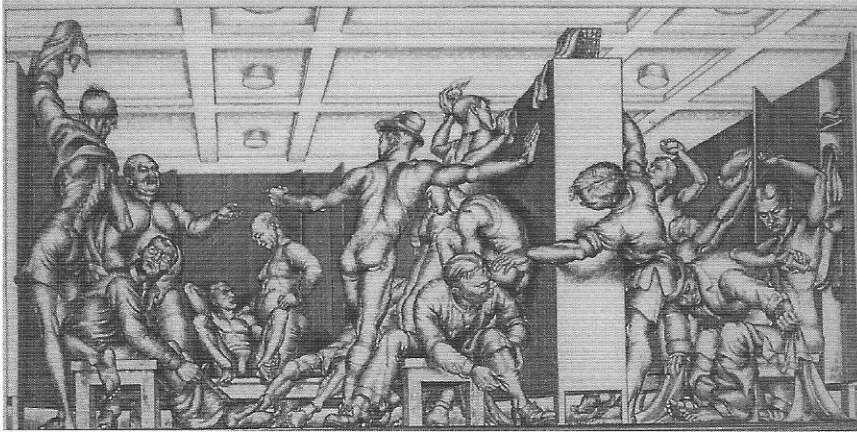
Smithsonian American Art Museum

Gift of Louis Schanker 1968.136

During the 1950s and 1960s, Louis Schanker moved away from the figurative references in his work and began making sculptures and paintings that were completely abstract. *Black and White* was carved from a solid piece of birchwood. The

composition explores the relationship between the natural shape of the wood and the geometric form of the two spheres. Schanker painted part of the piece black to create contrasts between the dark and light spheres, and the outside and inside of the wood.

For more information about this work visit the [Luce Foundation Center](#).



## THE NEW YORK INTAGLIO FIGURE 1917 TO 1954

JULY 19 THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2006

**Louis Schanker (1903-1981)**

48. *Abstraction #6*, 1945  
Brooklyn Museum 73, etching and aquatint  
Edition of 8, 4 x 6 1/8 inches  
Crease at left  
Signed, titled, and numbered, in pencil.
49. *Abstraction #18*, 1945  
Brooklyn Museum 85  
Etching printed in green, hand touched  
with black ink  
Unique, 6 x 8 3/4 inches  
Plate break at top and bottom right  
corner. Signed, titled,  
and numbered 1/1, in pencil.

SUMMER HOURS: TUESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, 11 AM TO 6 PM

**SUSAN TELLER GALLERY**

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**UNDER THE INFLUENCE**  
**AMERICAN ARTISTS LOOK AT PICASSO**

OCTOBER 12 THROUGH NOVEMBER 25, 2006

Images available at:  
[homepage.mac.com/stg568/Influence/PhotoAlbum45.html](http://homepage.mac.com/stg568/Influence/PhotoAlbum45.html)

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Louis Schanker, 39, *Three Men on a Bench*, about 1939

### LOUIS SCHANKER (1903-1981)

36. ***Box at Concert*, 1933**

Litho-crayon, sheet size 9 x 13 inches

Signed and dated in pencil.

37. ***Box at Concert*, 1934**

Litho-crayon and crayon,

sheet size 9 x 11 1/2 inches

Signed and dated in ink.

38. ***(New York Still Life)*, 1937**

Lithograph, 9 x 7 inches

Signed and dated in pencil.

39. ***Three Men on a Bench*, about 1939**

Brooklyn Museum 35, woodcut

Edition of 35, 9 x 12 inches

Signed and numbered in pencil, signed,  
titled, and numbered on the reverse,  
in pencil.

***For the People:***  
***American Mural Drawings of the 1930s and 1940s,***  
**a look inside a public art movement, January 12-March 11, 2007**  
**The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar**

**Louis Schanker (American 1903-1981)**

**Federal Art Project, Works Progress Administration**

***Mural Study for New York World's Fair Medicine and Public Health Building 1938***

**Oil on canvas, 14 x 28 inches, Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery**

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY — During the 1930s and early 1940s, a flowering of mural painting in the economically depressed United States took place, resulting in thousands of murals decorating the nation's buildings. Many artists, who had often been isolated from public society, sought at that time to become a significant part of it, as in Mexico where artists had established a politically inspired movement in wall painting. Largely spurred during the Great Depression by President Franklin Roosevelt's ambitious New Deal programs, artists took part in competitions to create murals in post offices or other government properties. They were paid through public or private wages, to paint murals across the country for museums, hospitals, high schools, housing projects, colleges, music halls, even ships and night clubs, among numerous other public places.



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James Daugherty (1887-1974), *Music: Study for "American Rhythm"* (detail)

American muralists in this era followed the Renaissance model and made a series of different drawings in their work process, including sketches of individual figures, compositional drawings in both black and white and color, as well as full-scale drawings made for transfer to the wall. The new exhibition *For the People: American Mural Drawings of the 1930s and 1940s*, presents approximately thirty drawings, paintings, and sketchbooks used in preparation for making murals during this period, as well as numerous archival photographs of both completed murals and works in progress. The exhibition features such varied and noted artists as Charles Alston,



Milton Bellin, James Daugherty, Willem de Kooning, Olin Dows, Arshile Gorky, Marion Greenwood, Juanita Rice Marbrook Guccione, Rockwell Kent, Anton Refregier, Lewis Rubenstein, Andrée Ruellan, Louis Schanker, Ben Shahn, and Judson Smith.

For Vassar College, interest in acquiring mural drawings from these decades began over thirty years ago, and now the college's Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center has in its permanent collection over 60 preliminary sketches for murals of the New Deal. While a majority of the works in the exhibition come from the permanent collection of the Lehman Loeb Art Center, there are notable loans from the Archives of American Art, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in New York, Plattsburgh (NY) State Art Museum, and private collections.

As a theme for the exhibition, "for the people" suggests democratic, open values directed toward every citizen, a social ideal closely aligned with the notions of the New Deal, according to curator Patricia Phagan. "This was an era when national identity played an overriding role in Western culture, and especially so in American art. In the midst of a devastating depression, the identity of the nation became of overwhelming concern, especially for Roosevelt's New Deal administration with its broad work programs to aid the unemployed and re-build faith in the nation's democratic ideals. Artists, writers, photographers, folklorists, and others employed by the federal government or working on their own documented and interpreted American life, paying special attention to distinctive cultures, traditions, and histories," said Phagan, the Philip and Lynn Straus Curator of Prints and Drawings.

These issues of national identity were invariably tied to audiences, observed Phagan, though the original audiences are no longer intact as a viable group. "Who were the original audiences for these murals, why were particular themes chosen, and how did artists go about conceptualizing their designs? Attempting answers to these questions is integral to the exhibition. The one constant is that where a mural was placed provided the audience and the strategy for the work," she said.

The most popular aesthetic approach to the American mural during this period was an accessible, realistic style called the American scene, perhaps most recognizable today in the work of Thomas Hart Benton. This manner of painting was encouraged by government projects such as the Public Works of Art Project and the Section of Painting and Sculpture, which sponsored murals for post offices and several other government properties. A group of drawings in the exhibition are examples of this vital way of interpreting the everyday world. It includes Milton Bellin's large, full-scale charcoal from 1940, *Office Scene*, rooted in an illusionistic realism he learned at the Yale School of Fine Arts. Bellin made the study for a five-panel mural for the main building (Davidson Hall) at Teachers College of Connecticut in New Britain, now known as Central Connecticut State University. As artist-in-residence at the time, he chose models for his murals from the college population, his audience. In *Office Scene*, the final design for his panel on business education, he portrayed women students either busying themselves with duties or lost in reverie.

Andrée Ruellan's sunny entry for the Special 48 State Mural Competition evolved through her love of light and color, and the direct observation of people at the heart of American scene

painting. The Section of Fine Arts had invited artists to submit unsigned designs for forty-eight post offices across the country. In Ruellan's oil sketch, farmers and children engage in activities across an open landscape lively with brushed colors in a narrative meant to connect directly to the Delhi, NY public in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains. Ruellan made her sketch expressly for the lobby of the Delhi Post Office in rural New York, though another design was ultimately selected.

These straightforward American scene drawings and paintings are outnumbered in the exhibition by works that, while emphasizing specific locales, draw upon other ways of seeing, including humorous and political cartoons, politics, and European modernism.

Closely related to the American scene approach is the area of cartooning, since both American cartoons of the early twentieth century and the roots of the American scene lie in magazine illustration, where so many American artists received their early training. The highly readable shapes and lines of cartoons became a staple of American magazines and newspapers in the 1920s, a golden age of American cartooning, and they made an early impact on several artists whose works are in the exhibition. For instance, James Daugherty, in his American scene murals for Stamford (CT) High School, made studies that reach back to his days as a cartoonist at the *New Yorker* (where as "Jimmie the Ink" he created drawings dense with scenes, patterns, and caricatures). *Music*, a Stamford sketch by Daugherty in the exhibition, has a jumping rhythm that celebrates differing American musical forms, including spirituals, jazz, opera, and folk. Made for the school's music auditorium, Daugherty expressly chose students and faculty as models to solidify his connection to the local audience.

As with Daugherty's murals for Stamford High School, the vast majority of American murals during this period were made for local audiences with themes tied to regional history, contemporary life, or the land. For the nationwide competition to paint the history of San Francisco in the Rincon Annex of the San Francisco Post Office, Anton Refregier chose to depict a range of historical scenes for his extensive mural series. In his working drawings, he sometimes relied on the cartoon languages of concise images and class symbols to hone his design. In one Refregier sketch on view, a capitalist fights with other San Franciscans in a web of colliding lines, participating in a local riot over the question of the U.S. Civil War – the sketch implies this was an issue that affected people throughout the city.

Other artists in *For the People* also looked to cartoons for inspiration. As one of his sketchbooks in the exhibition shows, the longtime Vassar art professor Lewis Rubenstein (1939, 1946-1974) relied upon his cartooning roots when making quick sketches of a 1932 hunger march to Washington, DC. Rubenstein grew up in Buffalo, NY, began publishing cartoons as a teenager in the 1920s for the *Buffalo Evening News*, and went on to contribute cartoons to such outlets as the *Harvard Lampoon*. Interestingly, his spontaneous sketches of the hunger march to Washington were an eventual source for the fresco Rubenstein and Rico Lebrun devoted to this event, which the two painted in 1933 at Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum.

Many artists of the time also became embroiled in political and international issues. With the dire economic straits that so many of them experienced during the Great Depression, these artists saw capitalism as having failed a large part of American society. They also grew alarmed at rising

military forces and war in Europe, and works by a few artists in the exhibition were inspired by these specific concerns. For instance, Refregier executed a section on fascism and war for his San Francisco murals, showing Nazi book burning and the final defeat of Nazism by the Allies (a study for this work is on view).

While most of the exhibition's mural studies were made with American audiences in mind, *For the People* also includes studies conceived for Mexican audiences by Marion Greenwood, an American who became engaged with Mexico's politics and federal art patronage, and who was the first U.S. woman to paint murals for the Mexican government. For her mural at Morelia at the Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, she resolved to create an original work from her strong affinity for the area's indigenous people – indeed, the national identity of the Mexican Indian was essential for Greenwood in this mural, *Landscape and Economy of Michoacán*. Her final study was drawn to scale and is shown in the exhibition.

Greenwood's original expressionist design for her next mural in Mexico, *Industrialization of the Countryside*, to be painted for the Mercado Abelardo Rodríguez Civic Center in Mexico City, was soon replaced with the more compressed and composed drawing that is exhibited. This second version features stylized figures of revolutionary Mexican farmers, workers, and soldiers. It was the famed Mexican muralist Diego Rivera who advised the Mercado mural program, invited Greenwood and her sister Grace to participate in the large, multi-artist project, and approved the second design. An archival photograph in the exhibition also documents the vigorous panel that was the centerpiece of Greenwood's mural.

Greenwood's murals in the Abelardo Rodriguez Market in Mexico City reverberate with both a boldness of line and color, and a deep interest in the social welfare of the Mexican people. Elsewhere in the exhibition, a similar boldness of design and interest in the heritage of one's audience is seen in the Charles Alston drawing *Magic in Medicine*. Here the African-American artist was inspired by the stylized, rhythmic forms of African sculpture. Alston made this study – interpreting traditional African healing rituals – for one of his two murals at Harlem Hospital, commissioned in 1936 by the Federal Art Project of the New Deal's Works Project Administration (WPA).

European modernism also became a filter through which several artists in the exhibition conceptualized their mural drawings. Cubism and Surrealism, for example, were powerful influences on some of these mural studies. Refregier worked with cubist-derived, angular shapes in his competition drawings for the Rincon Annex of the San Francisco Post Office, several of which are in the show. Daugherty used synchromism in a preparatory watercolor, *The Epic of New England*, made for his high school mural series in Stamford, CT. The synchromist theory involved the application of contrasting colors and was derived from the intense colors of the French Fauves and the color-rich cubism of the Delaunays in Paris. With brilliant colors and twisting forms in *The Epic of New England*, Daugherty placed Puritans, abolitionists, and Native Americans into a frenzied modernist collage recounting the region's pioneer past. However, he also bared an ugly episode of history in his sketch. His startling depiction of a slave anchors the left-hand side of the drawing.





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Arshile Gorky (b.Armenia 1905-1948), Study for Entry for Unexecuted Mural, Marine Transportation Building

Arshile Gorky used cubist and biomorphic abstraction to present the futuristic, industrial shapes and symbols of an American ship, in his one sketch on view. Made for a large international fair that focused on "the future," his rejected design was created for the dining room of a ship for the Marine Transportation Building at the New York World's Fair of 1939. Vassar's painting on view is a section of an early study for the proposed mural.

Like the sketch by Gorky, the exhibition's early study by the famed abstract expressionist painter Willem de Kooning was a U.S. Maritime Commission competition entry. It pictures a young de Kooning standing on an isolated dock, attended by a seagull and billowing drapery. The abstruse and mysterious work was submitted for a ship mural, and the design carries odd, irrational juxtapositions of elements, inspired by currents of Surrealism prevalent then in New York.

In the end, all of the drawings shown in *For the People* were prepared for the audiences that would ultimately see the mural – whether sailors, students, tourists, or men and women who bought stamps at their local post offices. Products of idealistic thoughts, these murals most often communicated the features or history of a locale with that local audience in mind, though issues on national and world stages were sometimes suggested or confronted. In the process, the artist truly worked outside of herself, researching and studying and making a number of sketches along the way to arrive at the mural on the wall. Though these drawings are complicated in their development and topicality, they remain quite vital.

*For the People: American Mural Drawings of the 1930s and 1940s* is generously supported by the Smart Family Foundation, Inc. The exhibition will be accompanied by a 16-page publication, authored by curator Patricia Phagan.

Exhibition Lecture and Reception (free and open to the public)

Exhibition reception

Saturday, February 3, 4:00 p.m.

Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center

124 Raymond Avenue, Poughkeepsie

(845) 437-5632, <http://fllac.vassar.edu>

Exhibition lecture

"New Deal Art Revisited: The Splendid Muralists of Dutchess and Ulster Counties and What They Told Me", a talk by Karal Ann Marling, professor of art history at the University of Minnesota

Saturday, February 3, at 5:00 p.m.,

Taylor Hall, Vassar College

124 Raymond Avenue, Poughkeepsie

(845) 437-5632, <http://fllac.vassar.edu>

Exhibition and Mural Tours (free and open to the public)

Tour of the exhibition *For the People: American Mural Drawings of the 1930's and 1940's*

Tuesday January 30, 2007

12:00 p.m.

Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center

124 Raymond Avenue, Poughkeepsie

Led by Patricia Phagan, curator of *For the People: American Mural Drawings of the 1930s and 1940s*, and the Philip and Lynn Straus Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center

Due to space limitations, please call Kelly A. Thompson (845) 437 -7745 or contact her via email at [kethompson@vassar.edu](mailto:kethompson@vassar.edu) to RSVP or for more information.

(845) 437-5632, <http://fllac.vassar.edu>

Tour of murals in the Poughkeepsie Post Office

Saturday, February 24, 2007

3:00 p.m.

55 Mansion Street, Poughkeepsie

William B. Rhoads, professor emeritus of art history at SUNY-New Paltz, will discuss the post office murals, the building's architectural design, as well as FDR'S involvement in their creation. Space is limited, so please contact Kelly Thompson at the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center for more information (845-437-7745, [kethompson@vassar.edu](mailto:kethompson@vassar.edu)). Free transportation to the Poughkeepsie Post Office from the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center will be available, but reservations are required.

(845) 437-5632, <http://fllac.vassar.edu>

Tour of the Main Street Mural

Saturday, March 3, 2007

2:00 p.m.

Main Street (between Catharine and Market streets), Poughkeepsie

Artist Franc Palaia will discuss his contemporary "Main Street Mural," a historical and colorful

depiction of storefronts that have been well-known staples in Poughkeepsie over the last 100 years. This is one of many outdoor murals that Palaia has painted.

Free transportation to the Main Street Mural from the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center will be available, but space is limited. To make reservations, or for further information, contact Kelly Thompson at the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center (845-437-7745, [kethompson@vassar.edu](mailto:kethompson@vassar.edu)). (845) 437-5632, <http://fllac.vassar.edu>

Tour of murals in the Rhinebeck Post Office

Tuesday, March 6, 2007

10:30 a.m.

6383 Mill Street, Rhinebeck

William B. Rhoads, professor emeritus of art history at SUNY-New Paltz, will discuss the post office murals, the building's architectural design, as well as FDR'S involvement in their creation. Space is limited, so please contact Kelly Thompson at the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center for more information (845-437-7745, [kethompson@vassar.edu](mailto:kethompson@vassar.edu)). Free transportation to the Rhinebeck Post Office from the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center will be available, but reservations are required.

(845) 437-5632, <http://fllac.vassar.edu>

## **About the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center**

The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center was founded in 1864 as the Vassar College Art Gallery. The current 36,400-square-foot facility, designed by Cesar Pelli and named in honor of the new building's primary donor, opened in 1993. The Lehman Loeb Art Center's collections chart the history of art from antiquity to the present and comprise over 16,000 works, including paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, photographs, and glass and ceramic wares. Notable holdings include the Warburg Collection of Old Master prints, an important group of Hudson River School paintings given by Matthew Vassar at the college's inception, and a wide range of works by major European and American twentieth century painters. Vassar was the first U.S. college founded with a permanent art collection and gallery, and at any given time, the Permanent Collection Galleries of the Art Center feature approximately 350 works from Vassar's extensive collections.

Vassar College is a highly selective, coeducational, independent, residential liberal arts college founded in 1861.

Individuals with disabilities requiring accommodations or information on accessibility should contact Campus Activities Office at (845) 437-5370. Without sufficient notice, appropriate space and/or assistance may not be available.

Vassar College is a highly selective, coeducational, independent, residential liberal arts college founded in 1861.

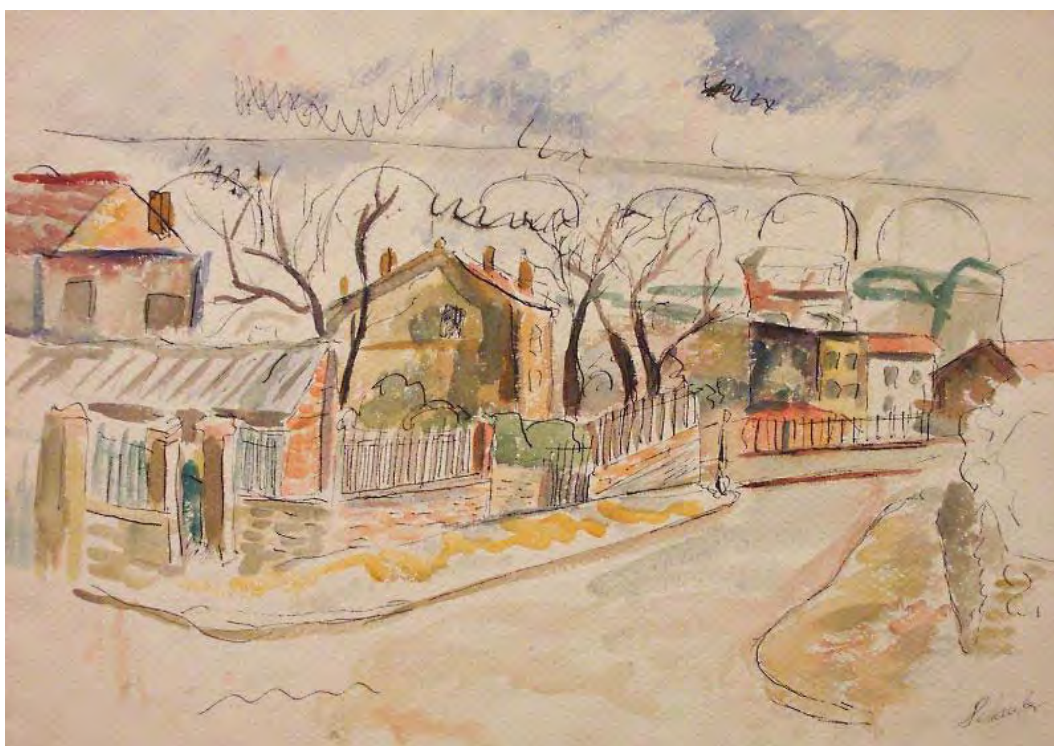
This article was posted on Wednesday, November 15th, 2006.



# PICTURING OZ

FEBRUARY 16 THROUGH MARCH 24, 2007

**OZ** here is a place unlimited by reality, an Eden where everyone is always warm and well fed, a vision of a distant but golden future. For James Daugherty, Theo Hios, Harry Sternberg, and others, it is New York City, for Louise Leech it's Philadelphia, and for Dorothy Browdy Kushner and Fred Shane, it's Kansas City. There are also views of sites considered special by so many: Big Sur by Claire Mahl Moore, the Ile. St. Louis by Riva Helfond, and a French aqueduct by Louis Schanker. In a few instances there are works that reflect a wonderful, ideal moment, like *Crossing the Border*, 1945, by Jennie Siporin, or summer days by Will Barnet and Ansei Uchima.



LOUIS SCHANKER (1903-1981)

43. **(French Village with Aqueduct)**, about 1934

Ink and watercolor, sheet size 15 x 21¼ inches

Signed in ink

Images available at:

[homepage.mac.com/stg568/Oz/PhotoAlbum47.html](http://homepage.mac.com/stg568/Oz/PhotoAlbum47.html)

## SUSAN TELLER GALLERY

568 BROADWAY • NEW ROOM 502A • NEW YORK, NY 10012 • 212 941-7335

# AMERICAN MODERNIST PASTELS

JULY 11 THROUGH AUGUST 24, 2007

**LOUIS SCHANKER (1903-1981)**

20. *Discourse*, 1936

Pastel on gouache-prepared board

Sheet size 8 x 16 inches

Signed and dated in pencil.

## SUSAN TELLER GALLERY

568 BROADWAY • NEW ROOM 502A • NEW YORK, NY 10012 • 212 941-7335

SUMMER HOURS: TUESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, 11 AM TO 6 PM



## PAINTINGS FROM THE WPA

## PAINTINGS FROM THE WPA

HERMAN ROSE ★ LOUIS SCHANKER ★ JOSEPH SOLMAN

September 15 – October 9, 2007

Opening Reception at  
**Mercury Gallery Boston**  
Saturday, September 15, 5 – 7pm

[WWW.MERCURYGALLERY.COM](http://WWW.MERCURYGALLERY.COM)  
8 Newbury Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Boston, MA 02116  
tel: 617.859.0054

FRONT COVER: Louis Schanker, *Architectural Still Life*, oil on canvas, 29" x 36"



Herman Rose, Louis Schanker and Joseph Solman were among the many artists nationwide who participated in the federal government's Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Depression. From 1935 to 1942, the U.S. government spent about \$35 million to keep artists employed with a weekly salary by purchasing the art they produced. At the end of the WPA program, works that were not exhibited in public buildings were stored in warehouses. Later on, not understanding the value of this work, government bureaucrats sold it by weight (4 cents a pound) to a junk dealer.

An astute New York dealer named Henry C. Roberts rescued these national treasures and began showing them in his gallery. Upon hearing that the WPA paintings were being sold many artists rushed to the dealer's store to buy back their work. One such artist was Joseph Solman, who borrowed money to buy back five of his paintings including *The Oculist* and *Jefferson Tower*. Sixty years later these monumental works are being offered by the Mercury Gallery.

## MERCURY GALLERY

8 Newbury Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Boston, MA 02116  
[WWW.MERCURYGALLERY.COM](http://WWW.MERCURYGALLERY.COM)



From **LIFE MAGAZINE** April 17, 1944

Henry C. Roberts selling rescued art work at his store on New York's lower West Side circa 1944 (see inside for story).



MERCURY GALLERY  
— BOSTON —

Louis Schanker, *The Seine, Paris*, c.1932, oil on canvas, 20 x 24 inches

## Louis Schanker

February 7–March 4, 2008

Opening reception

Saturday, February 16th, 3–5 p.m.

[www.mercurygallery.com](http://www.mercurygallery.com)

GALLERY HOURS:

Monday–Saturday, 10–5:30

MERCURY GALLERY  
8 Newbury Street, 2nd Floor  
Boston, MA 02116  
617.859.0054

### ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Acclaimed painter and printmaker Louis Schanker (American, 1903–1981) spent the early, formative years of his career in Paris from 1931 to 1933. It was during this period that he looked to the European moderns for artistic inspiration. *The Seine, Paris* (c.1932), demonstrates Schanker's fresh, vital and distinctly American approach to painting. His works from this period are among his most desirable and form the foundation for the abstraction that would soon appear in his paintings. Louis Schanker's works are in numerous public collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, the Museum of Modern Art, NY, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY. Mercury Gallery is pleased to represent the estate of Louis Schanker, which includes many works that have never before been exhibited.

During the month of February Mercury Gallery will also show paintings by Harriet Bain, Ben-Zion, Herman Rose, Louis Schanker, Joseph Solman and Karl Zerbe.

**The Art Museum at the University of Kentucky**  
**“Breaking Tradition, Forging Ahead: WPA Prints from the Collection.”**



Football A woodcut by Louis Schanker

**LEXINGTON, Ky. (July 17, 2008)** – While the Great Depression caused an economic slump that affected markets across the world, the United States saw artistic accomplishments boom as creativity was allowed to flourish under the federal government’s Works Progress Administration (WPA). The program, which provided jobs to several artists across the nation, would go on to define a uniquely American approach to art. In celebration of the 75th anniversary of this program and at the request of a museum studies class, the Art Museum at the University of Kentucky is presenting “Breaking Tradition, Forging Ahead: WPA Prints from the Collection.”

During the Great Depression, artists supported by the WPA were offered a living wage in exchange for their art, which led to the exploration of new media and content and an artistic boom in the U.S. "Breaking Tradition," organized by students in a museum studies class under the direction of Christine Huskisson and museum staff, showcases a variety of works on paper selected from a WPA collection presented to UK in 1943.

"Breaking Tradition" aims to bring to light the art of an era that set artistic expression free. The show displays prints by such renowned artists as Louis Schanker, Max Kahn, Anne Rice O'Hanlon and Miné Okubo, now known to many for their work in woodcuts, printmaking, lithographs, paintings and murals. The exhibition of WPA art from artists such as these aims to have patrons asking themselves "What if you were free to express yourself?"

Many individuals familiar with the work funded by the WPA also recall the history of the program's popular public murals. Among the museum exhibition are prints from O'Hanlon, one of the numerous artists assigned to create these murals. Local audiences may recognize the name of this artist, as O'Hanlon created one such mural at UK's Memorial Hall. The WPA mural, one of the few remaining historic murals of its kind still in existence today, can still be viewed there.

"Breaking Tradition" is a free exhibition that is open to the public. Patrons can see the show through Sept. 15. Museum hours are noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday and noon to 8 p.m. Friday. For more information, visit the [museum's Web site](#) or call (859) 257-5716.



Treetops Chamber Music Society

Oskar Espina Ruiz  
Artistic and Executive Director  
presents

# Opening Night

## Virtuoso Duos and Trios

With an Art Exhibit by Louis Schanker

The Treetops Studio in Stamford was artist Louis Schanker's working studio during the last 20 years of his life. The building has a lovely setting in the woods, and hearing music in the space, with prints and watercolors of musicians created by Schanker, made for a powerful experience, a blending of sonic and visual delights.

**Stamford Advocate** Jeffrey Johnson



Trio

Louis Schanker, 1937





Schanker at Treetops Studio, 1980

### ***Lyrical Abstraction***

### ***Louis Schanker at Treetops CMS***

***September 14 & 21, 2008***

In October of 2006 the Treetops Chamber Music Society (Treetops CMS) under the direction of Oskar Espina-Ruiz began a new life for the Treetops Studio on the former estate of the 1930's Blues singer Libby Holman and the artist Louis Schanker.

Louis Schanker and Libby Holman were married in 1959. The Studio was Louis Schanker's main work site until his death in 1981. Libby Holman, who introduced the songs, "House of the Rising Sun" and "Moaning Low," held glamorous parties at Treetops that attracted many political and entertainment celebrities. Her final wish was that Treetops be used as parkland and a cultural center. Fortunately Treetops has been protected as *open space* thanks to the efforts of a broad coalition of concerned people.

Louis Schanker was an artist and supervisor in the Graphics and Mural divisions of the **WPA** in New York City and was involved in several artist movements of the 30's, 40's and 50's. *Schanker's is an art which is important in understanding the development of the second wave of american abstraction which culminated in Abstract Expressionism.* (1981, Susan Fillin Yeh, art historian.) For over 20 years Schanker was a professor at the New School for Social Research and Bard College. He worked in watercolors, prints, oils and sculpture. In his 1964 book, **About Prints**, Stanley Hayter, artist and author, states, "*From Louis Schanker's example the great development of the color woodcut in America chiefly stems.*" Schanker's works can be found in many major museums including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City and The Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C. It is especially appropriate that Schanker's former studio is the venue for the Treetops Chamber Music Society as he loved music and nature, both of which are reflected in his artwork.

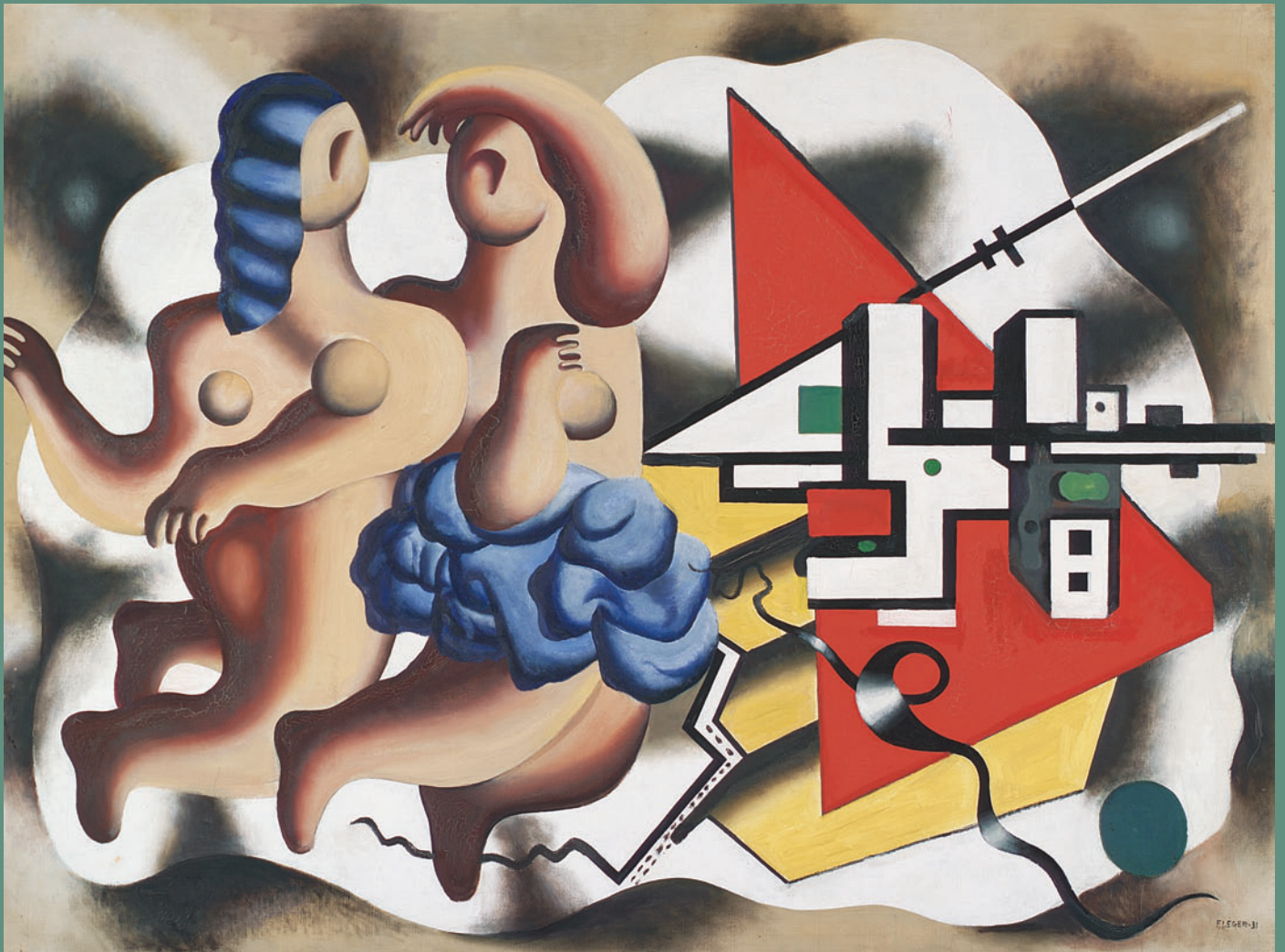
For more information go to [\*\*www.treetopscms.org/\*\*](http://www.treetopscms.org/) [\*\*www.LouisSchanker.info\*\*](http://www.LouisSchanker.info)



Lou Siegel, nephew of Louis Schanker, discusses the displayed artwork and relates some personal memories of the Libby Holman, Louis Schanker, era at Treetops.

# *Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art*

ANNUAL REPORT 2008–2009





## Staff Activities 2008–2009

ELLEN AVRIL gave a gallery talk at the Emerson Gallery, Hamilton College, in conjunction with the exhibition *Cherishing the Past: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy from the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art*. She participated in the 10th Workshop for Korean Art Curators, sponsored by the Korea Foundation, in Seoul, South Korea. She was also invited to speak on Chinese painting as part of Ithaca High School's 2009 Nosanchuk Lecture Series.

MATT CONWAY is a trustee of the Exhibition Alliance, and was recently elected to the board of Ithaca's Community Arts Partnership. He represents the Johnson Museum as an "Elf Leader" for Cornell's Elf Program – a holiday charity managed by Cornell staff and benefiting regional schoolchildren. Matt also volunteers at Cornell's Baker Institute for Animal Health.

HANNAH DUNN RYAN volunteered for the American Red Cross Holiday Blood Drive, is a member of Ithaca Forward, and plays softball in the Cornell Intramural League. She attended a seminar at the Museum of Modern Art on museum programming for people with Alzheimer's. She also showed a series of her paintings at the Statler Hotel School Guest Chef Series dinner with Chef José Andrés in February.

ELIZABETH EMRICH presented a paper, "Performing Differently: Specificity in the Study of Chinese Conceptual Art," at the Cornell University History of Art and Visual Studies Graduate Symposium.

PETER GOULD served on the boards of directors of the Ithaca Adult Hockey Association and the Ithaca Yacht Club.

NANCY GREEN gave a talk on Byrdcliffe at the Roycroft Arts and Crafts Conference and a talk on Arthur Wesley Dow and his influence at the Grove Park Inn Arts and Crafts Conference in Asheville, North Carolina. In addition she gave a talk on Dow's influence at the Wadsworth

Atheneum and wrote an article on the collection of Stephen Gray for *Antiques* magazine. With the opening of the Bloomsbury exhibition, she gave a talk at the Nasher Museum of Art as well as talks for the Cornell Clubs of Eastern Florida and the Raleigh-Durham area. She taught a Cornell Adult University summer class on the Arts and Crafts movement in New York State. She is a member Trustee of the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, a member of the Print Council of North America, and a three-year appointee to the National Endowment for the Arts Indemnity Program.

CAROL HOCKETT presented talks entitled "Write to See" at the New York State Art Teachers Association Annual Conference and "The Leonardo Lessons" for the Kansas City Missouri Public Library. She volunteers at the Ithaca

Kitchen Cupboard, Tompkins Learning Partners, and Lansing Residential Center, and serves on the board of Cornell's Protestant Cooperative Ministry.

CATHY KLIMASZEWSKI spoke on a parent panel for training providers at the Franziska Racker Centers on the topic of "Living with a Developmental Disability." She served as an advisor to the symposium *Winslow Homer in the 1870s: A Time of Crisis in American Art* at the SU Art Gallery, Syracuse University and organized and taught Drawing Across the Board: A Museum/Studio Seminar for Cornell Adult University's Summer Program. Cathy participated in the Museum School Partnership Learning Network Symposium at the Queens Museum of Art, sponsored by the New York State Council on the Arts, and attended the American Association of Museums



LOUIS SCHANKER  
American, 1903–1981  
*Hai-Jali (Jai-Alai)*, 1939  
Color woodcut  
Gift of Steve Harris, Class of 1955  
© Estate of Louis Schanker



# THE MITCHELL GALLERY

St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland

## **A Century on Paper: Prints by Art Students League Artists**

*March 6 - April 17, 2009*

The Art Students League of New York has long been known for introducing and formalizing many different artistic techniques and styles. This exhibition is an extraordinary visual record of America's shifting cultural and artistic development throughout the 20th century. It focuses on the various types of printmaking created by both well known and lesser-known American artists. These works include etchings, lithographs, silkscreens, engravings and woodblock prints that reflect major trends in artistic style from 1901-2001.

### **Members Preview Reception**

*Friday, March 6*

*A Century on Paper: Prints by Art Students League Artists* preview reception from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. for Mitchell Gallery members.

### **Opening Reception and Family Program**

*Sunday, March 8*

Art Educator Lucinda Edinberg will lead a tour of the exhibition, *A Century on Paper*, followed by a hands-on workshop from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Free and open to the public.



Louis Schanker (1903-1940)

*Polo Players*, 1940

Color woodcut