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Join the Club: Regional Print Clubs in the United States

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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by

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ABSTRACT

Join the Club: Regional Print Clubs in the United States

by

Sarah N. Bane

During the Great Depression, many artists and arts organizations required federal aid through programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to survive. One remarkable exception to this trend was the dynamic growth of print clubs, with new groups founded throughout the United States and many membership levels reaching new heights. *Join the Club: Regional Print Clubs in the United States* addresses this anomaly: why did regional print clubs thrive when other arts organizations required federal support to survive? My dissertation reveals that print clubs are critical sites for understanding how regional constituencies expressed specific aesthetic, political, and social distinctions through the circulation of fine art. Bringing together artists, collectors, and community members keen to develop their knowledge of art, I suggest that these print clubs were regional formations of what would ultimately become a thriving print market in the United States following World War II.

Join the Club: Regional Print Clubs in the United States presents three case studies from across the United States. Each of these organizations were either founded or reached their highest membership numbers during the interwar period. Beginning with a close study of The Print Makers Society of California, I establish how women printmakers used their affiliations with regional print clubs to gain recognition for their art in a male dominated field. Chapter Two explores the ways in which print clubs developed communities engaged in printmaking and collecting across the United States during the 1930s and 1940s through a close analysis of the Prairie Print Makers. Chapter Three concludes with a study of the Philadelphia Print Club as professional and social center for a dynamic community of artists and collectors. Focusing on a group of Black artists who joined, exhibited at, and led workshops with the Print Club, this chapter reveals key contributions Black printmakers made to the growth of printmaking practices at midcentury.

These three case studies, with their regional features and differing emphases, form a representative history of print clubs in the United States and demonstrate their essential role in the development of collecting and production practices characterizing American printmaking. These organizations created audiences for fine art prints and provided spaces for the recognition of a diverse range of artists. As such, *Join the Club: Regional Print Clubs in the United States* is part of a growing literature that addresses the work of artists who experimented outside of the academy and traditional gallery settings, revealing a more nuanced story of American art and the dynamic role of printmaking within it.

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Join the Club: Regional Print Clubs in the United States

Introduction:

Regional Print Clubs in The United States, Their Origins and Their Growth from the Late Nineteenth Century to the 1930s

> *Our Society weathered the world-wide financial storm better than we could have hoped. As might be expected, sales from the Traveling Exhibits dropped to almost nothing as such luxuries as prints are the first things to be cut off when hard times come. However, with the present showing towards an upward swing of the cycle, we believe that the new season will show better results. As we said before, even with hard times, the Associate Membership increased slightly over the last year which goes to show they appreciate what they receive for their dues.*[1]

Howell C. Brown, the secretary and co-founder of the Print Makers Society of California (PMSC), shared this optimistic view of the regional print club's future in 1933 despite the devastating political, economic, and social hardships posed by the Great Depression. While Brown noted that American audiences were unable to purchase individual fine art objects to the same extent as they had during the 1920s, he was keen to point out that their club's membership numbers did not meet a similar decline. Instead, Brown celebrated the increase in associate memberships, stating "they appreciate what they receive for their dues."[2] This surprising claim brings forward the question: what role did regional print clubs play in the lives of their members that led some audiences to consider annual membership fees essential expenses during the Great Depression?

While the Great Depression forced numerous artists and arts organizations to seek federal aid through programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA), regional

[1] Howell C. Brown, "The Society in General," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, 1933. n.p.

[2] Ibid.

print club underwent a dynamic growth during the 1930s, with new organizations founded throughout the United States and many membership levels reaching new heights. *Join the Club: Regional Print Clubs in the United States* addresses this central question: why did regional print clubs thrive when other arts organizations required federal support to survive? My dissertation demonstrates that print clubs are critical sites for understanding how regional constituencies expressed specific aesthetic, political, and social distinctions through the circulation of fine art. Bringing together artists and audiences keen to develop their knowledge of printmaking, these clubs were regional formations of what would ultimately become the structure of a thriving art market in the United States following World War II.

The scholarly literature on American printmaking has characterized the 1930s as a period of technical and artistic growth due to the New Deal's federally funded arts programs.[3] Under the umbrella of the WPA, the Federal Art Project (FAP) encouraged printmaking as a means of expression for artists through efforts such as the Fine Print Workshops and Community Art Centers.[4] Scholarship has emphasized the role these

[3] For a selection of texts on the general history of printmaking in the United States see: Judith Brodie, Amy Johnston, and Michael J. Lewis, *Three Centuries of American Prints From the National Gallery of Art* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2016), Stephen Coppel, *American Prints from Hopper to Pollock* (Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries for an exhibition at the British Museum, 2008); Una E. Johnson, *American Prints and Printmakers: A Chronicle of Over 400 Artists and Their Prints from 1900 to the Present* (New York: Double Day, 1980); David Tatham, ed., *North American Prints, 1913-1947* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006); James Watrous, *A Century of American Printmaking 1880-1980.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984) among others.

[4] The FAP operated from 1935 to 1943. For a further discussion of federally sponsored arts organizations see *Art for the Millions: Essays from the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project* Francis V. O'Connor, ed. (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975); Helen Langa, *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Karal Ann Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of the Post Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Joan A. Saab, *For the Millions: American Art and Culture Between the Wars* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Jordan A. Schwarz, *The New Dealers: Power Politics in the Age of Roosevelt* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994); Klare Scarborough, *American Scenes: WPA-Era*

federally sponsored organizations played in promoting artists' interests in printmaking practices during the interwar period, portraying the 1930s as a second "printmaking revival" in the United States.[5] This characterization positions the 1930s as period of growth for printmaking that blossomed and withered along with federal support, emphasizing moments of rupture while discounting continuities that exist across the historical narrative.

Private arts organizations and their contributions to supporting and maintaining audiences for printmaking have largely been ignored in the literature on American printmaking during the 1930s. This absence is a major omission as print clubs were critical spaces for artist and audience development during the twentieth century. Placing the growth of regional print clubs during the 1930s in a larger context of private arts organizations from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, my dissertation reveals that print clubs are critical links in creating a continuous narrative of printmaking in the United States. Therefore, I argue that print clubs allow scholars to reframe the history of American printmaking not as a series of sudden revivals but as a continuous tradition of fine art printmaking from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s.

While each regional print club followed their own distinct structure depending on the goals of their founders and the needs of their audiences, I will first establish some shared qualities of what defines these organizations for the purposes of my dissertation.[6] Print clubs

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Prints from the 1930s and 1940s (Philadelphia: La Salle University Art Museum, 2014) among others.

[5] Scholarship on fine art printmaking in the United States has largely characterized the history of the media as having three distinct revivals: the Etching Revival at the turn of the twentieth century, the growth of the media during the 1930s under federal sponsorship, and the contemporary workshop boom of the 1960s. See Watrous 1984 as an example of this narrative.

[6] The following articles demonstrate the limited, although crucial literature on the larger history of these arts organizations in the United States. Theresa Moir Engelbrecht, "Inter-Collected: The

were first established in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century as organizations to promote printmaking as a fine art distinct from commercial reproduction. In exchange for an annual fee, artist members often received access to a shared printing press, technical instruction on printmaking practices, and the ability to display their work at their club's annual exhibitions. By the early twentieth century, many clubs expanded to include non-artists, termed "associate members," who received one print annually in exchange for their dues. All members typically shared access to a central meetinghouse where they could visit their club's rotating exhibitions and listen to regular talks by artists and print historians.

Founded in 1877, the New York Etchers Club was the first such organization established by American artists in the United States.[7] Including members well known for their painting practices such as Fedrick Church, Thomas Moran, and William Merritt Chase, the New York Etchers Club looked to European models of painter-etchers made popular by the American-born James Abbott McNeill Whistler working in England.[8] Following the foundation of the New York Etchers Club, the print club movement flourished along the

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Shared History of the Print Club and Museum Collection," *Art in Print* Vol. 7, No. 2 (July-August 2017): 30-33; Marilyn S. Kushner, "Genesis of the Twentieth-Century Print Club," *American Identities: Twentieth-Century Prints from the Nancy Gray Sherrill, Class of '95, Collection* (Wellesley, MA: Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, 2004); Lisa Peters, "Print Clubs in America," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 13, no. 2 (August 1982): 88–91.

[7] The art historian Lisa Peters considers that the New York based Association for the Promotion of Fine Arts was the first American "print club" as it promoted painting and other fine arts using prints. Being that prints were not of sole or even primary importance for this organization, I have chosen instead to focus on the New York Etchers Club as the first print club in the United States. Peters, 88.

[8] For a further exploration of Whistler's etchings see Ruth Fine, *Whistler Etchings* (Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1987).

East Coast during the 1880s.[9] By the 1890s, artists and critics pushed against the medium's expansion into commercial practices, criticizing it as a detriment to fine art printmaking.[10] American interest in print clubs dwindled as a result of these commercial associations, with no new club organizations established for over twenty years.

The 1910s saw a renewed interest in these private arts organizations with approximately ten new print clubs founded throughout the United States. Many of these organizations took on increasingly active roles in their communities, establishing what we now consider to be the modern form of the print club, featuring both artist and associate members as well as annual gift prints. The resurgence of interest in these private arts organizations can be identified as the result of two leading forces: the dissemination of European ideals on printmaking through the artist Joseph Pennell and the leadership and professionalization of women artists and collectors.

Termed the "Dean of American Printmaking," by the art historian James Watrous, Pennell played a critical role in promoting both American printmaking practices and Whistler's legacy in the United States.[11] These aspects of the artist's legacy have been well documented in the existing literature; however, Pennell's influence on American print clubs

[9] The Boston Etching Club, The Philadelphia Society of Etchers, The Society of The Society of Painter-Etchers in New York, The Cincinnati Etchers Club, and The Brooklyn Scratchers Club were all founded during the 1880s.

[10] The first curator of prints at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, S.R. Koehler noted that the popularity of the printmaking medium had largely dwindled even within print clubs by the 1890s. As the German born print historian, Frank Weitenkampf wrote: "Koehler, as early as 1892, found that the various etching societies organized with such enthusiasm, had been for years in a state of innocuous somnolence…The urgency of publishers caused over-production, and turned legitimate interest into a fad." Frank Weitenkampf, *American Graphic Art* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1912) 36.

[11] See James Watrous, *A Century of American Printmaking 1880-1980.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has yet to receive scholarly attention. A founder of the influential Senefelder Club in England in 1909, Pennell quickly realized the value of the print club as a discursive space for exchanging ideas, techniques, and collecting practices related to prints.[12]

Frequently traveling between the United States and Europe, Pennell sought to replicate the success of British and French printmakers in America. During his return visits to the United States, Pennell led a series of traveling lectures which frequently took place at women's clubs or in association with regional print clubs.[13] Pennell used his speaking engagements to create a direct connection between printmaking and print club membership with the fashionable and elite tastes of Europe.[14] Speaking to both artists and audiences, Pennell encouraged artists to take up a variety of printmaking practices and collectors to treat these objects as works of fine art.[15] These lectures positioned print clubs as educational spaces that produced and disseminated knowledge on printmaking and collecting. As such,

[12] See Joseph Pennell, "Artistic Lithography: Lecture I," *Journal of the Royal Society of the Arts*, Vol. 62, No. 3216, (July 10, 1914) 729-747.

[13] In 1884, Pennell moved to London. Beginning in 1904, the artist made frequent trips back to the United States, returning full time in 1917. For example, one review of a lecture Pennell gave to the Ohio Women's Club at Cleveland stated, "Mr. Pennell is an artist with great gifts. He has found a way to improve upon the work of unimaginative draftsmen, and in his etchings has invested great industrial works and shipyards with glamor and beauty." S.C. Lambert, "Poster of Persian Garden?" *Printers' Ink*, Volume 110, Issues 1-2 (1920).

[14] For an example of the type of lectures Pennell gave at regional print clubs see "The Print Club of Philadelphia Meeting Minutes 1919," Box 1, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[15] Pennell employed a similar technique in his writings. See Joseph Pennell, *Etchers and Etching: Chapters in the History of the Art, Together with Technical Explanations of Modern Artistic Methods* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1925).

print clubs were a critical force in building markets for fine art printmaking throughout the United States.

Women artists and collectors also played influential roles in developing American print clubs at the turn of the twentieth century. Women artists often used these organizations to gain professional recognition for their work and representation in some of the most important collections in the United States.[16] Women collectors shaped print clubs into active civic organizations that allowed white women to take on increasingly public roles outside the home at the turn of the century.[17] In this introduction, I focus on a single woman artist, Bertha E. Jaques, and her pioneering role as a leader of the regional print club movement. While each chapter in my dissertation references Jaques's important contributions, a larger discussion of the artist's transformation of her own print club into a supportive space for women printmakers lies outside the confines of my three chapters. Jaques and her role in the foundation of the Chicago Society of Etchers reveals how these private arts organizations became critical spaces for artists whose voices had been marginalized in traditional academic and gallery settings to build community and gain recognition for their own printmaking practices.

Jaques's life, work, and contributions to the Chicago Society of Etchers have been well documented by the art historian Joby Patterson.[18] Building upon Patterson's

[16] Chapter one and two explore how women artists at both the Print Makers Society of California and the Prairie Print Makers built on their clubs' institutional affiliations to enter their work into regional and national museum collections.

[17] Chapter three explores a key example of this through the Print Club of Philadelphia.

[18] Joby Patterson, *Bertha E. Jaques and the Chicago Society of Etchers* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2002).

informative narrative, I will call attention to key aspects of Jaques's writings and artistic practice to examine how the artist paved the way for printmakers whose work did not receive the same institutional support as their white, male counterparts. Jaques's work with the Chicago Society of Etchers can therefore be seen as a model not only for the foundation of other regional print clubs but also as a reference point for other marginalized artists who used print clubs as a space of professionalization and recognition for their own printmaking practices.

Jaques created her first etching in her home studio in the wealthy Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois in 1894. Self-taught using the foundational texts *Treatise on Etching* by the French artist Maxime Lalanne and *Etching and Etchers* by the British printmaker Philip G. Hamerton, Jaques took an inventive approach to materials, repurposing her husband's surgical tools from his work as a doctor into needles capable of scratching into her copper plates.[19] This transformation of the domestic sphere into an artist's workshop points to both the resourcefulness and tenacity of the artist as she pursued her artistic vision. Building upon the domestic associations of her home studio, she made technical demonstrations of her printmaking process for local women's organizations, helping build an engaged community of female collectors in the Chicago region.[20]

[19] Ibid, 115. See also François Antoine Maxime Lalanne, *A Treatise on Etching*, trans. S.R. Koehler (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1880); Philip Gilbert Hamerton, *Etching and Etchers* (London: Macmillan, 1886).

[20] For example, the *Woman's Who's Who of America* from 1914 lists Jaques, her address and her status as a wife to a Chicago doctor, and the fact that she serves tea with the technical demonstrations she gives on printmaking to Women's clubs. John William Leonard, *Woman's Who's Who of America* (New York: The American Commonwealth Company, 1914).

In addition to creating female audiences interested in prints, Jaques established institutional support for women printmakers as one of the four founders of the Needle Club in Chicago which became the Chicago Society of Etchers in 1910.[21] One of the first print clubs to offer a gift print to its associate members in exchange for their annual dues of five dollars, the Chicago Society of Etchers as organized by Jaques ushered in the modern form of the American print club. The artist played an active role in not only conceiving of the Chicago Society of Etchers but also maintaining the everyday operations of the club.

Jaques was particularly well known for her active correspondence as the print club's secretary, building upon her position to correspond with printmakers from around the world.[22] Helen Hyde was one such artist with whom Jaques developed a friendship following their professional correspondence. Jaques's 1922 book, *Helen Hyde and Her Work: An Appreciation* noted that their relationship blossomed following a debate through an exchange of letters on the use of color in the etching process. [23] While Jaques preferred technique was to follow Whistler's model by avoiding color in her prints, she noted that Hyde used a vibrant color palette in her etchings that drew inspiration from Japanese *ukiyo-e* seen in works such as *Alley in Chinatown* from 1898 (figure 1). Although the two artists differed in their formal approaches to etchings, they supported one another's works professionally. In her role as the club secretary, Jaques featured Hyde's prints in the club's

[21] For a sociological study of Jaques role in the American "Etching Revival" see Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, *Etched in Memory: The Building and Survival of Artistic Reputation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

[22] A detailed discussion of the impact of this correspondence on the national network of print clubs can be found in chapter one.

[23] Bertha E. Jaques, *Helen Hyde and Her Work: An Appreciation* (Chicago: The Libby Company Printers, 1922)

exhibitions and even acted as the artist's representative in the United States during Hyde's frequent trips to Japan.[24] This camaraderie was typical for Jaques, whose friendships with other women artists during her tenure as the club secretary demonstrates how the artist used her association with the Chicago Society of Etchers to support other artists working in printmaking. Their collective energies furthered the work of women printmakers through reciprocal support and Jaques's curatorial influence on exhibitions.

In addition to championing individual women artists, Jaques was a vocal proponent for the equal treatment of women artists in the larger field of American printmaking. In one such instance, Jaques responded a sexist poem by the English poet Thomas Hood's on women printmakers from 1897 with her own humorous verses. Hood's poem used technical terms in printmaking to question the propriety of women printmakers. "Tho' it scarce seems a lady-like work, that begins/ In a scratching and ends in a biting!/ Yet oh! That the dames of the Scandalous School/ Would use the same acid, and sharp-pointed tool,/ That are plied in the said operations."[25] Jaques continued this play on words in her own "biting" retort. "Unless you know how etchings are made, you may not get my point, which should not be a dull one. A needle is usually associated with a woman—but the one I use is not threaded. There are enough knots in the technique without adding thread."[26] Here, Jaques used the gendered associations of etching terminology to oppose Hood's dismissal of women printmakers, questioning the constraints placed on women artists by bourgeois society.

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[24] Patterson, 120.

[25]Thomas Hood, "Etching Moralized: To A Noble Lady," in *Poems of Wit and Humour* (London: Macmillan, 1897) 348.

[26] Bertha Jaques quoted in Patterson, 118.

In her own words, Jaques did not consider herself a "militant suffragist," instead she used her public position to ensure women artists received the same opportunities as their male peers. "I don't belong to any of the suffrage organizations because I don't believe in fighting for that which clearly is the right of any sane woman."[27] Her point of view framed her advocacy for her fellow club members. One-fifth of the Chicago Society of Etchers exhibiting members were women, representing a significant group, particularly with to the limitations imposed on women artists at the beginning of the twentieth century.[28]

Jaques established herself as a practicing artist in a male domminated field through her own printmaking practice. Drawing inspiration from Whistler, she created her picturesque views of the industrial harbors along Lake Michigan. In one of her earliest prints *Dock at Mantivowac* from 1897, Jaques used a delicate scratching technique to create contrasting areas of dense, interconnected lines seen in the buildings along the harbor with the more open, gestural marks delineating the sky above (figure 2). This juxtaposition evokes the similar technique Whistler employed in his views of the Thames such as *Rotherhithe (Wapping)* from 1860 (figure 3). By calling upon Whistler's influential shipyards as a model for her own etchings, Jaques made a bold case for her inclusion as a significant artist among those following Whistler's legacy in America.[29]

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[27] Jaques interview quote goes on to state: "and which I think will be easily ours as soon as certain of our brothers realize the absurdity of the 'No votes for women' attitude. I think that another generation will laugh heartily at the present suffrage hostilities, just as we find supremely ridiculous thought of the time when it was considered improper and dangerous for women to travel alone." Ibid.

[28] Elizabeth G. Seaton, *Paths to the Press: Printmaking and American Women Artists* (Manhattan, Kansas: Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, Kansas State University, 2006) 18.

[29] It is interesting to note that unlike Whistler, the majority of Jaques harbor scenes do not include human figures. This might possibly be due to her lack of academic training and the prejudice women continued to face when entering life drawing classes.

By carrying on Whistler's etching tradition in the United States, Jaques did not confine her subjects to still life images or picturesque landscapes that might have been considered more appropriate for a woman artist at the turn of the twentieth century. Instead, she alluded to Whistler's style as evident in his *Limehouse* from 1859 where industrial harbor scenes are transformed into picturesque images (figure 4). However, Jaques was not simply imitating Whistler. In works such as her 1904, *Factories on the Chicago River*, she made visible the billowing smoke from the factories and steamships, dissolving into a delicate swirling pattern as rises to the sky (figure 5). Jaques insists on the industrialized city, demarcating a decidedly modern space, one that would not normally be acceptable terrain for white, middle-class women. In so doing, Jaques was not only a follower of Whistler but an innovator, trumping the limitations placed on her gender while firmly staking a claim for her right–as a woman and an artist–to represent the industrial heart of the city.

Factories on the Chicago River was featured in the *Exhibition of Works by Chicago Artists* at The Art Institute of Chicago in 1904, positioning Jaques's work in a prestigious exhibition space alongside her male peers.[30] Recognizing the importance of using existing arts organizations to gain recognition for her work, Jaques ensured that the Chicago Society of Etchers both held their annual exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago from 1910 until 1931 and received approximately six group exhibitions at the Smithsonian Museum from

[30] "Exhibition of Works by Chicago Artists" (Art Institute of Chicago, 1904), The Art Institute of Chicago Library.

1923 until 1937 when she retired from her position as the club secretary after more than thirty years of service.[31]

Until her death in 1941, Jaques worked diligently for the national recognition of American printmakers.[32] In an announcement of her death in the PMSC's newsletter, the artist and print club leader Howell C. Brown noted her status as a powerhouse in the graphic arts field. "No one person has ever done so much to further the interest in prints and their makers, and all over world the many friends she has made will mourn her loss. What more can we say except to add that in her work for our art she has left a lasting monument, far greater than any stone or marble marker that may be placed over the spot where she sleeps."[33] Jaques's career serves as a case study exemplifying how individual women artists built upon their associations with regional print clubs to take active roles in shaping national discourses on printmaking and collecting.

The following chapters feature three case studies including the Print Makers Society of California, the Prairie Print Makers, and the Philadelphia Print Club to establish regional print clubs as influential organizations that both created art markets in the United States and provided spaces for marginalized artists to engage in artistic experimentation through printmaking. They were selected as these organizations were either founded or experienced

[31] Patterson, 136. Chapter one goes on to shed light on the PMSC and the Chicago Society of Etchers' relationship with the Smithsonian curator Ruel P. Tolman and the formation of a national network of print clubs and museum departments devoted to fine art prints.

[32] Patterson also notes this aspect of Jaques career, citing that Jaques wrote to the artist Reynold Weidenaar one month before her death: "When you get more prints, I hope you get an exhibition in the Smithsonian institution in Washington—I hope I can stay here long enough to engineer it." Jaques as cited in Patterson, 120.

[33] Howell C. Brown, "Bertha E. Jaques," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, 1941.

the apex of their membership during the Great Depression. Each chapter serves as a representative example of the United States' regional diversity, where their members created dynamic communities centered around printmaking. Essentially overlooked in the existing scholarly literature, these print clubs paved the way for a dynamic network of American printmakers to flourish in the aftermath of World War II. Understanding print clubs as an Americanist lineage to a strong contemporary print market, I suggest that regional print clubs present critical links to create a more nuanced understanding of the history of American art.

Chapter One investigates how regional and national artistic concerns emerged through the PMSC and their traveling exhibition programs. Beginning in the 1920s, the PMSC organized two large exhibitions annually with smaller shows appearing at local community centers. Of the two large-scale exhibitions, the annual *International Print Makers Exhibition*, was open to submissions from artists from across the globe. The PMSC hosted these International Exhibitions at Los Angeles Museum of History, Science, and Art, what became the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). Following each exhibition, the PMSC subsequently donated selections from the exhibition to the museum's nascent print collection, establishing an institutional tradition of collecting prints by contemporary artists in Southern California. In addition to participating in the growth of regional print collections, the PMSC also engaged with a network of regional print clubs across the United States to define the national collection of prints at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. through exhibitions and donations. Combining these traveling exhibitions with an aesthetics derived from the Japanese woodblock tradition, club members such as Frances H. Gearhart claimed a cosmopolitan status for themselves as women artists

working in California. Positioning the West Cost as an international center for printmaking practices, I suggest that regional print clubs helped lay the foundations for the growth of printmaking workshops in California during the 1960s.

My second chapter follows the Kansas-based print club, the Prairie Print Makers, which was notable for their support of technical innovations in printmaking practices during the interwar period. Founded in 1930, the club experienced its largest growth during the Great Depression through WWII, demonstrating the resiliency and stability print clubs represented for regional artists and audiences during some of the most tumultuous periods in modern American history. While the Prairie Print Makers advocated for the recognition of printmaking as a form of fine art, the organization was led by artists who moved freely between commercial and fine art printmaking. The lived realities of these artists signaled the necessity of recognizing both sectors as essential to the printmaker's livelihood, demonstrating a more nuanced relationship between high art and its otherwise denigrated commercial counterpart. This chapter looks to the Prairie Print Maker's associations with commercial and fine art lithography to explore how print clubs promoted experimentation in the medium throughout the 1930s despite the lack of federal funding. Examining the Prairie Print Makers' creation and distribution of representational art as a means of expressing cultural distinction through their Associate gift print, this chapter establishes how print clubs created communities of audiences engaged in printmaking and collecting across the United States.[34]

[34] This chapter draws on the work of scholar Benedict Anderson. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd edition (London and New York: Verso, 1983).

Chapter Three investigates the Print Club of Philadelphia as a professional and social center for a community in flux. Founded in 1914 by a group of rising print enthusiasts, many of whom were white, middle-class women, the Print Club functioned as social center for its members. The club rapidly expanded its membership during the interwar period, reaching over eight hundred members in 1931. The artist Allan Randal Freelon was a part of this growing number, becoming the club's first Black member in 1929. Although his membership status fluctuated throughout the 1930s, Freelon took a paid position in the Print Club's workshop program led by the artist Stanley William Hayter of Atelier 17. These workshops began shortly after the closure of the WPA's Philadelphia Fine Print Workshop where a fellow Black print club member, Dox Thrash invented the carborundum printmaking process.[35] An extension of the diversity and technical innovation fostered by the federally sponsored art program, these private workshops provided a space for Black artists to create their own work in direct contact with an audience interested in prints. Focusing on Black artists who went on to establish their own studios and workshops following their association with the Print Club, this chapter reveals the key contributions Black printmakers made to the regional growth of printmaking practices at midcentury.

These case studies, with their particular regional features and differing emphases form a representative history of regional print clubs and demonstrate their essential role in the development of production and collecting practices characterizing American printmaking. These organizations created audiences for fine art prints and provided spaces for undervalued artists be recognized. Combining archival research with new interpretive

[35] This chapter builds off of the curator John Ittman's influential study of Thrash's work. John Ittmann, *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered* (Seattle and London: The Philadelphia Museum of Art in association with the University of Washington Press, 2002).

frameworks, my dissertation makes a key contribution to the scholarly literature on American printmaking practices. As such, my dissertation is part of a growing literature that addresses the work of artists who experimented outside of the academy and traditional gallery settings, revealing a more nuanced story of American art and the role of printmaking within it.

Chapter 1: The Print Makers Society of California and the Formation of Regional and National Print Collections

Introduction

> *One does not expect much from dwellers in Paradise; existence itself—just being there—seems sufficient; why worry about thinking things or doing things? California has always seemed such a paradise to me, and thus it happens that I do not look for much from California in the Graphic Arts.*[36]

Carl Zigrosser's dismissive commentary on printmaking in Southern California, has long characterized the history and reception of the region's graphic arts prior to the print workshop boom of the 1960s. Positioned as either a conservative backwater or a blank canvas on which artists from the East Coast or Europe came to as a reprieve from both harsh winters and the oppressive constraints of art historical tradition, the history of printmaking in California often focuses on narratives of rupture, change, or innovation.[37] While this framing is characteristic of art historical literature more broadly, this lens has limited scholarly understandings of the region's rich print history.

Within the scholarly literature, print clubs in particular have been dismissed as harbingers of conservative artistic ideals rather than important if not essential to the medium's modern growth within Southern California.[38] While this conservative

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[36] Carl Zigrosser, *The Lithographs of Richard Day* (New York: E. Weyhe, 1932) n.p.

[37] For general texts on printmaking in Southern California see David Acton, "Printmaking Communities in Southern California, 1900-1960," in *Proof: The Rise of Printmaking in Southern California* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2011); Sheri Bernstein, "Selling California, 1900-1920," in *Made in California: Art, Image, and Identity 1900-2000* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2000), 65–101; Victoria Dailey, "Frances Gearhart and the Development of Artistic Printmaking in California," in *Behold the Day: The Color Block Prints of Frances Gearhart*, ed. Susan Futterman (Pasadena, California: Pasadena Museum of California Art, 2009).

[38] Art historians Ebria Feinblatt and Bruce Davis, for example characterize the printmaking in Los Angeles during the 1920s as filled with "naïve conservativism and complacency." Ebria Feinblatt and Bruce Davis*, Los Angeles Prints 1883-1980*. Los Angles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art ext. cat. 1980. For a general description of print clubs nationally see Marilyn S. Kushner, "Genesis of the Twentieth-Century Print Club," in *American Identities: Twentieth-Century Prints from the Nancy*

characterization describes the stylistic preferences of many print club members, this chapter focuses on a single print club, the Print Makers Society of California (PMSC), to examine how print clubs operated in the region. Through a close study of the context in which the PMSC developed, the printmaking practices of select members, and the club's exhibition and collecting practices, this chapter reveals a nuanced understanding of the ways in which print clubs aided in the development of modern printmaking practices along the West Coast. Therefore, I will argue that print clubs such as the PMSC played a pivotal role in establishing both institutional support of and audience interest in printmaking prior to the 1960s. Adding to a growing scholarly literature that seeks to expand the discourse of artistic practices in California prior to WWII, this chapter positions regional print clubs as an Americanist lineage to the contemporary printmaking workshops that proliferated along the West Coast during the 1960s.[39]

My chapter begins with discussion of the historical context in which the PMSC was founded, paying particular attention to the growing interest in printmaking along the West Coast from the 1910s to the 1930s. Focusing on the key influence of the Brown Brothers and the Gearhart Sisters, I address how women artists used their association with the print club to gain recognition for their work and a prominent place within artistic communities often dominated by men. I then discuss the understudied history of the PMSC's international exhibitions and their foundational support for collections of contemporary American prints

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Gray Sherrill, Class of '95, Collection, 2004th ed. (Wellesley, MA: Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, n.d.); Lisa Peters, "Print Clubs in America," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 13, no. 2 (August 1982): 88–91.

[39] Jenni Sorkin, *Art in California* (London: Thames and Hudson Inc., 2021) is a recent example of such scholarship seeking to expand scholarly understandings of the region.

at both the Los Angeles Museum of History Science and Art which later became the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Placing these national and regional histories in conversation with one another, this chapter positions regional print clubs as critical forces for institutionalization of contemporary printmaking practices within American art museums. Focusing on narratives of continuity rather than rupture, this chapter both places Southern Californian printmaking within a larger dialogue on the history of American art and reframes these printmakers works as a distinctly regional response to larger questions of modernity and nationalism.

The Historical Context for the PMSC

The PMSC was founded at a moment of increasing national interest in both civic institutions oriented towards the arts and printmaking as a means of artistic expression.[40] National support for print making and collecting was supported through both publications such as the *Print Collector's Quarterly* founded in 1911 and organizations such as the Chicago Society of Etchers which was established in 1910.[41] Along the West Coast, interest in printmaking also grew with the formation of regionally specific printmaking

[40] For a further exploration of the formation of American museums as civic institutions see, Jeffrey Trask, *Things American: Art Museums and Civic Culture in the Progressive Era* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

[41] The Chicago Society of Etchers, one of the most prominent and influential clubs of this period was founded in 1910 and likely served as a model for the PMSC. For a further investigation of the Chicago Society of Etchers and Bertha Jaques's influential role aiding other print clubs see Joby Patterson, *Bertha E. Jaques and the Chicago Society of Etchers* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2002).

organizations such as the California Society of Etchers in 1912.[42] In the Southern California region, lectures and exhibitions fostered a growing support for printmaking practices. For example, Arthur Wesley Dow, who recently began experimenting in a Japanese-inspired style of woodblock printing, spoke at the art a local Los Angeles women's club in 1911.[43] While in 1914, the wealthy collector Tod Ford displayed 125 prints from his sizable collection of *ukiyo-e* at the Throop University in Pasadena, a display that many locals who eventually joined the PMSC likely attended.[44] While these examples reflect the growing national and regional interest in the medium during the 1910s, it was large-scale exhibitions such as the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 that arguably had the greatest influence on printmaking practices along the West Coast and the eventual founding of the PMSC.

Held in 1915, the Panama-Pacific International Exposition featured displays of thousands of prints, including more works by contemporary printmakers then had been included in either of the United States' previous world's fairs.[45] Prints could be found throughout the Exposition as the organizers celebrated advancements in commercial printing and paper technology as well as fine art prints. Within the Palace of the Fine Arts and its

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[42] For a further investigation of the club which became the California Society of Printmakers see Marylyn Snow, ed., *California Society of Printmakers: One Hundred Years 1913-2013* (San Fransisco: California Society of Printmakers, 2013).

[43] Sydney Ford, "Women's Work, Women's Clubs," *Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 1911. Howell C. Brown, one of the founders of the PMSC, was likely in attendance at this lecture.

[44] Susan Futterman, ed., *Behold the Day; The Color Block Prints Od Frances Gearhart* (Pasadena, California: Pasadena Museum of California Art, 2009) 17.

[45] For a close study of the Panama Pacific International Exhibition see Coleen Terry, "Prints at the Exposition," in *Jewel City: Art from San Francisco's Panama Pacific Exposition* (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museum San Francisco, University of California Press, 2015), 215–25.

Annex, print displays included a range of technical processes from etching to lithography; however, "copies," as well as works deemed to be the result of industrial processes were excluded from this area.[46]

While the International Exhibition included all forms of fine art printmaking, the Palace's organization and awards particularly celebrated etchings with rooms devoted to both James Abbott McNeil Whistler and Joseph Pennell.[47] One such influential work which visitors would have seen upon visiting the Panama Pacific International Exposition was Whistler's *The Lime-Burner (W. Jones, Lime-Burner, Thames Street)* from 1859 (Figure 1). Here, Whistler uses the delicate scratching to create a picturesque scene of the busy London harbor. This depiction reflects both an interest in depicting specific, recognizable places and highlighting the sketch-like quality of the medium. While made 50 years prior, Whistler's etching style and approach to subject matter continued to be a source of inspiration for many artists who went on to become members the PMSC.[48]

Following the prominent position etchings occupied in the International Exposition, the artist Pedro J. Lemos, who went on to become a member of the PMSC, wrote a review

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[46] This division within the printmaking displays can be seen as reflected in the PMSC's eventual goal to promote fine art printmaking as distinct from commercial reproduction. Thus, what been dismissed as the PMSC's conservative response to changing printmaking technologies can be seen as part of a larger anxiety surrounding the definition of fine art printmaking during this period.

[47] Pennell chaired the awards committee and was the only living American artist honored with his own print gallery in the Exposition. Terry, 216-218. Pennell, an influential figure in promoting the second wave of print club's through speaking engagements around the country. As a result of his efforts, a particular understanding and type of etching were promoted through the space of these print clubs as established in the introduction.

[48] For a further exploration of the etching tradition in England see Emma Chambers, *An Indolent and Blundering Art?: The Etching Revival and the Redefinition of Etching in England, 1838-1892* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). The PMSC continued this association through their international membership and exhibitions including a show of English lithographs at the Smithsonian Institution in 1927.

that celebrated the displays and called printmakers to action. “Now that the public has become interested and cognizant of the beauties of etchings— ‘the autographic art’— through the fine setting given the art at the Exposition for so many months, it really behooves the California etcher to keep the fires burning.”[49] Lemos went on suggest that California was on the precipice of becoming a great center for printmaking. “California is buying etchings. Buying small prints, and without color. And there is no greater indication of the rise of art and that California will become the art center of the West than this fact.”[50] Suggesting that the Exposition was the beginning of California’s etching revolution and an opportunity for Californian printmakers to end their “isolation.” Lemos concluded his article with the grand claim:

> Etching has just commenced in California. Art is budding to a new spring. California means much to the etcher, because it offers every inducement for etching. California has given its quota in drama and letters. Music and art will follow, and who can deny that etching will be one of the methods of creating for California a distinctive, interesting position in the art world?[51]

Lemos’ call to action was met with particularly enthusiastic zeal by many members of the PMSC including the Brown brothers who celebrated etching’s expressive qualities.[52]

In addition to the prominent position etching received, Japanese woodblock prints were also given special attention at the Panama Pacific International Exposition. While

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[49] Pedro J. Lemos, “California and Its Etchers--What They Mean to Each Other,” *California’s Magazine: Edition de Luxe* 2 (1916) 113.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid, 115.

[52] *The Print Letter of the Print Makers Society of California* was one of the key ways the Brown brothers disseminated their support for the etching, beyond producing prints in the media. Select articles that extol the virtues of etching are: Howell C. Brown, “First Aid for the Beginner in Print Buying,” *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, 1925; Howell C. Brown, “How Prints Are Made,” *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, 1941.

works on paper were featured in the Japanese pavilion as well as an exhibition on the history of Japanese paper making in the Palace of Liberal Arts, it was the Japanese section of the Palace of Fine Arts that was most prominently discussed in the press coverage of the Exposition.[53] This display contained one room entirely devoted to the study of Japanese art including both English publications as well as reproductions of Japanese woodblock prints.[54]

While it is difficult to identify individual works featured, an image of the exhibition includes both landscapes and actor portraits as well as objects likely included for their didactive purpose such as an uncarved wood panel seen in the lower right of an exhibition snapshot (Image 2). However, Utagawa Hiroshige was one artist who was specifically identified in the exhibition.[55] Hiroshige's *Sudden Shower over Shin-Ōhashi Bridge and Atake* from 1857 (image 3) is one example of a print that could have been included in this section. Featuring the delicate application of bold colors seen in the bokashi technique applied at both the top and bottom of the print, Hiroshige's print demonstrates a technical mastery of the Japanese woodblock technique that also had a strong influence on the printmaking practices of many PMSC members.

The foundation and growth of the PMSC can in many ways be seen as a response to, and a continuation of the artistic ideals presented in the Panama Pacific International Exposition. Following the Exposition, California experienced an explosion of commercial

[53] Terry, 224.

[54] Jiro Harada, "Japan at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition," in *California's Magazine: Edition de Luxe* (San Fransisco: California Magazine Company, 1916) 325.

[55] Terry, 225.

printmaking.[56] Rather than embrace these new commercial advancements, members of the PMSC further distinguished their printmaking practices from commercial image making. Focusing on the definition of printmaking as a form of fine art, leading members of the PMSC positioned their work as the fulfillment of the artistic and international ideals presented by the Panama Pacific International Exhibition, marking Californian printmaking as a middle ground between the printmaking traditions of Europe and Japan.

The Foundation of the PMSC and the Brown Brothers' Artistic Leadership

A group of eight artists led by the brothers Howell and Benjamin Chambers Brown built on this growing interest in prints to found the Print Makers Society of Los Angeles in 1914.[57] Expanding by invitation to fourteen artists considered the founding members, the PMSC made it their mission to "awaken an inter est [sic] in print makers and their work."[58] Consisting of both local members based in Southern California as well as both national and international members, the PMSC quickly rose to prominence by amassing nearly 150 artist members in its first decade. Expanding to include non-artists termed "Associate Members" in 1920, the organization's sizable membership ballooned to allow for 400 membership slots by 1931.[59] Led by their Southern California based members, the PMSC produced a monthly publication called the *Print Letter of the Print Makers Society of California,* annual exhibitions, and released one associate gift print annually.

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[56] For a further investigation of the growth of commercial screenprinting studios see Acton, "Printmaking Communities in Southern California, 1900-1960."

[57] By 1920 the organization had changed their name to the Printmakers Society of California.

[58] Howell C. Brown, "Our Society," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California* 1, no. 3 (December 1922): 3–4.

[59] Howell C. Brown, "Spring Meeting," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California* IX, no. 9 (April 1931).

At their founding, the PMSC's primary goal was to educate the larger public on fine art printmaking and collecting. "The Print Makers Society of California was organized in the year 1914 as an international, non-profit organization designed for educational purposes, to further print appreciation, and mutually benefit the graphic arts and artists."[60] Aimed at both artists and collectors, the print club was a critical space for bringing together both groups in support of the media. As discussed further in chapter 3, many print clubs promoted their work as educational initiatives that can be seen as an extension of Progressive Era values and a means of defining middle class taste.

Orienting their club internationally from its founding, the Brown Brothers sought to elevate the status of American printmaking nationally. Howell C. Brown suggested that American artists lacked the technical training needed to claim a prominent position for their arts internationally. "The American artists, as a whole, have more to say [than their international counterparts] but many of them do not know how to say it. If they would spend more time finding how to handle their medium, we would soon have a print reputation second to none… As I have said before, we try to write a sonnet when we do not know our a b cs."[61] Part of the larger Progressive Era movement in California, the Brown brothers positioned the PMSC as an important organization to both educate American artists on the medium and create an informed public in the Southern California region.[62]

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[60] "The First International Print Makers Exhibition under the Auspices of the Print Makers of Los Angeles" (Museum of History, Science and Art, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Ca., March 1, 1920), Copy in the New York Public Library Print Collection.

[61] Howell C. Brown, "The California Print Makers," *Prints* 1, no. 4 (May 1931).

[62] For a broad overview of painters and collectors working in Southern California during this period see Jasper G Schad, "An Art-Hungry People: The Impact of Progressivism, World War I, and the Panama Pacific International Exhibition on Art in Los Angeles, 1915-1930," Southern California Quarterly 97, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 317–61.

Open to artists, amateurs, and collectors, the PMSC sought promote their educational mission through the development of communities centered around the enjoyment of prints. "An exhibiting art society which holds itself aloof from the public has no reason for being and can not [sic] long endure."[63] Fellow artist Edna Gearhart noted Brown's ability to bring together a wide range of audiences through the print club, leading to their success and influence in region.

> Howell Brown's great contribution to the art world has been in the vision and untiring effort that have made possible this work of the Print Makers Society of California. The vitalizing contact of many races and communities through these exhibits cannot be overestimated in its stimulation of printmaking and the development of an appreciation for these arts… [Howell] is making a significant contribution to California's cultural life.[64]

Gearhart's description reveals the PMSC became essential to not only supporting existing printmakers, but also building more diverse audiences centered around the medium.

As the print club continued to grow, Howell saw the PMSC as playing a critical role in shaping American taste, particularly though the organization's traveling exhibition program.

> Visitors increase each season and the artists showing in the exhibits are better known and loved. Prints are being purchased for homes; such prints are foci of interest in the development of a love for the beautiful. The present members may not see the complete flowering of American art appreciation, which is bound to come, but, if in this unfolding the society has played its part, the work it has done and is doing will not be in vain.[65]

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[63] Howell C. Brown, "The Print Makers Society of Southern California," *The American Magazine of Art* 15, no. 6 (June 1924): 298.

[64] Edna Gearhart, 288-289.

[65] Brown, "The Print Makers Society of Southern California," (June 1924): 299

Here, Howell points to not only the growing audience for prints but also the increasing number of American artists working in the medium. This definition of a national audience alongside artists interested in creating a national art form, makes print clubs a crucial space for exploring the growth of the medium within the history of American art.

To fully understand the Brown brothers as leaders of the PMSC, we must also address their artistic training and stylistic approaches. Both Benjamin and Howell were drawn towards depictions of the Californian landscape, however the two brothers had remarkably different artistic backgrounds. Benjamin began his artistic training at the St. Louis School of Fine Arts going on to study at the Académie Julian as a portrait painter in 1890. In 1896 he moved with his mother to Pasadena, California where he began landscape painting, quickly gaining recognition for his impressionistic efforts.[66] Howell, on the other hand, was never formally trained as an artist and instead studied engineering at Stanford University. Howell worked as an engineer and then a rancher in Mexico following his graduation, joining his brother and mother in Pasadena after the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910. While he had not received formal training, he began technical experiments in printmaking practices ranging from etching to lithography upon his return to California.[67] Following Howell's interest in the technical aspects of printmaking, Benjamin

[66] Gearhart, "The Brothers Brown-California Painters and Etchers: Organizers of the Print Makers Society of California."

[67] Ibid.

also explored an interest in the medium, producing his first etchings in 1914 the same year they would go on to found the PMSC.[68]

Comparing Benjamin's *Desert Palms* (figure 4) and Howell's *Eucalyptus* (figure 5) reveals that although the two brothers did not share the same level of mastery, they both chose to present relatively similar views of the landscape that demonstrated an interest in printmaking techniques and traditions. In both prints, the Brown brothers used trees as framing devises to present contained, knowable views of the rugged California landscape. Benjamin's print uses drypoint and an artful application of ink seen in the way the print gradually lightens at the center, demonstrating both his knowledge of the English etching tradition and the ability to master the intaglio technique.

Howell, on the other hand, did not achieve the same level of technical success as his brother. Instead, the artist was not able to achieve a clear special understanding in his print seen in the same value of line for used for both the tree in the foreground and the mountains behind. Howell also was not as technically proficient in his use of the acid bath as his plate has been over-bitten causing the ink to bleed outside of his inscribed lines, loosing definition in spaces such as the shadows along the bottom of the print.

While the two brothers did not share the same mastery of printmaking, they both worked towards the advancement of the media and promoted a particular approach towards fine art printmaking that reflected an understanding of traditional printmaking techniques. Thus, throughout their tenure as leaders of the PMSC, the Brown brothers often supported artists who technically built on traditional forms of printmaking while creating artworks that

[68] For a further exploration of Brown's biography and painting practice see Scott A. Shields, Jean Stern, and Jenkins Shannon, *Benjamin Chambers Brown: 1865-1942 California Colors* (Pasadena, California: Pasadena Museum of California Art, 2007).

featured recognizable imagery of the American landscape, projecting a national identity rooted in tradition through print.

Frances Gearhart's and the PMSC, A Case Study in Women Artists' Use of Japonisme

In addition to expanding audiences interested in printmaking, the PMSC encouraged a range of artists to pursue the medium through commissions, exhibitions, and shared technical instruction. In this section, I will focus on Francis Gearhart's association with the print club to examine how women artists both gained support for their work and achieved prominent positions within a male dominated field through their print club memberships.

During the 1910s, numerous art clubs and organizations founded by white, middle-class women proliferated in the Los Angeles region.[69] Rather than taking an active role in one of these women-led organizations, Gearhart chose to pursue an association with the PMSC founded by white male artists in the Pasadena area where she lived. While a study of Gearhart's biography is both beyond the scope of this paper and has already been well documented in the Pasadena Museum of California Art's catalogue *Behold the Day: The Color Block Prints of Frances Gearhart*, I will address aspects of the artist's training and printmaking practice to establish how she used her association with the PMSC to both further her own artistic practice and create a prominent position within this male dominated field.[70]

Gearhart and her family moved to California from Iowa in 1888. After studying at the State Normal School in Los Angeles and later the University of California, Berkeley,

[69] The Friday Morning Club and The Ruskin Art Club are two such examples. See Victoria Dailey, "Frances Gearhart and the Development of Artistic Printmaking in California," (2009) 10-11 for a further exploration.

[70] See Futterman, *Behold the Day: The Color Block Prints of Frances Gearhart*.

Gearhart began teaching English at the Los Angeles Highschool. During her teaching career, Gearhart pursued her own artistic training through classes during the summers in Ogunquit, Maine. At the same time, her sisters Edna and May studied with Arthur Wesley Dow in Ipswich, Massachusetts.[71] Although Frances never trained directly with Dow, she was aware of his work as her sisters taught her the woodblock printing technique following their studies with the artist.[72]

In 1924, Gearhart retired from teaching to both care for her ailing mother and pursue her artistic career full time. Through her network of institutional affiliations including the PMSC, Gearhart and her sisters made their Pasadena home a hub for artists within the upper middle-class community of Pasadena. One *Los Angeles Times* article from 1924 described their home as such: "the well-known Gearhart sister trio who have built around themselves a veritable art center in Pasadena which people who are interested in the beautiful use of color like to visit. She [Frances Gearhart] was listened to by her audience as one speaking with authority."[73] Placing their studio and gallery within their home, the Gearhart sisters maintained their standing as white middle class women while also extending their influence beyond the domestic sphere by inviting the art world into their home. The Gearhart sister's home, studio, and gallery as well as their privileged status as white middle class women

[71] Victoria Dailey, "Frances Gearhart and the Development of Artistic Printmaking in California," in *Behold the Day: The Color Block Prints of Frances Gearhart*, ed. Susan Futterman (Pasadena, California: Pasadena Museum of California Art, 2009) 10.

[72] Andrew Stevens, "The Spread of Style: Americans and the Color Woodcut of the Early Twentieth Century," in *Color Woodcut International: Japan, Britain, and America in the Early Twentieth Century* (Madison, WI: Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin Madison, 2006) 50.

[73] Myra Nye, "Simplicity Key in Home Beauty: Art Expert Gives Means of Room Decoration," *Los Angeles Times*, April 5, 1925.

afforded the artists an opportunity for increased financial and social independence that would not otherwise be possible for unmarried women during this period.[74]

One way that the Gearhart sisters brought the artworld into their domestic space was by hosting the PMSC's regular meetings at their home and studio. In one such winter meeting, the artist Bertha Lum regaled PMSC members with her experiences traveling to Japan and China after the conclusion of the normal business meeting.[75] By bringing both the practice of art making through the incorporation of the studio space and the exchange of ideas that might occur within a typical club house into the domestic sphere, the Gearhart sisters achieved a prominent role within the region's community of artists while working within the boundaries of accepted femininity.

In addition to hosting the organization's regular meetings, Gearhart both took an active role in the PMSC's leadership and frequently showed her work at the club's regular exhibitions. Beginning in 1921, Gearhart served as the organization's treasurer, going on to become a temporary editor of *The Print Letter* and a regular jurist for the International Exhibitions.[76] Gearhart first exhibited with the PMSC at the 1917 spring show going on to display seven linocuts in the club's 1919 annual exhibition. While I have been unable to locate images of these specific prints, their titles suggest that Gearhart was already keenly aware of the PMSC's interest in the California landscape.[77] While each of these early prints

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[74] "Teacher Sells Prints," *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 1923 pg. II12.

[75] Howell C. Brown, "Winter Meeting," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California* IV, no. 4 (January 1926).

[76] *The Print Letter of the Print Makers Society of California* documents Gearhart's changing roles through regular announcements.

[77] The titles of her prints include: *High Tide*, *Dusk*, *Oil Derrick*, *Fishing Boats*, *Sail Boats*, *A Veteran*, *A Bolinas Road*, "The Print Makers of Los Angeles, Fifth Annual Exhibition."

used the linocut technique, Gearhart returned to more traditional woodblock printing for her publication of the organization's first gift print, aligning her work the Japanese tradition.

Gearhart's *On the Salinas River* from 1920 was the first commissioned gift print distributed to the club's Associate Membership (figure 6). Choosing an image of the western landscape created by one of the organization's Pasadena-based artists for their inaugural gift print, the PMSC further promoted Californian artists who used both the landscape and traditional printmaking techniques to explore concepts of what it means to make a specifically American art. By selecting a woman artist to make the first gift print, the PMSC demonstrated their interest in expanding audiences and artists interested in the medium.

In her print, Gearhart created an intimate, yet vibrant picture of the banks of the Salinas River in Northern California. Gearhart framed the scene using the dark, knotted branches of a California Oak that she placed in the immediate foreground. In the open space behind the tree, the landscape blossoms into a brightly colored, lush valley filled with purple shadows, warm-orange grasses, and rolling blue-green hills. Gearhart used the woodblock technique to create strong outlines around each of her formal elements, demonstrating her interest in Japanese printmaking traditions. The color gradation along the hillsides from blue to green also mimics the application ink of the traditional bokashi technique. While these details demonstrate her interest in and awareness of the Japanese woodblock tradition of ukiyo-e, she uses identifiable elements in the California landscape to firmly root herself as an American artist. This regional specificity as well as her vibrant color pallet links her work directly to her male peers and leaders of the PMSC who enthusiastically promoted the California Impressionist style in their etching and painting practices.

Further, Gearhart's use of Japonisme elements can be seen as a way to claim status for herself as a woman artist within the male dominated art market. While many scholarly investigations of Japonisme have reproduced similar narratives that culminate in the formation of a new artistic style for European and American artists, I want to build on art historian Shigemi Inaga's exploration of Japonisme to establish the practice as an expression of taste rather than the development of an artistic style.[78] Inaga's article, "The Making of Hokusai's Reputation in the Context of Japonisme," traces how both artists and dealers in nineteenth century France used Japonisme as category for a range of styles, demonstrating a lack of formal coherence in both the creative process of the artists and the artworks themselves. Therefore, Japonisme can be seen as an expression of taste, a desire to not only to utilize elements found in Japanese artistic production but also associate with an aspect or quality that has been placed onto Japan.[79] Combining Inaga's reading of Japonisme as an expression of taste with Bourdieu's theorization of taste as an expression of class distinction, the use of Japonisme in American art can be understood as a desire to signal an elite, upper class identity for modern artists and consumers.[80]

Choosing to employ elements of Japonisme in her associate member print aimed at middle class consumers, Gearhart both aligned herself with the latest trends in contemporary printmaking and offered the club's associate members a means of expressing class

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[78] Shigemi Inaga, "The Making of Hokusai's Reputation in the Context of Japonisme," *Japan Review* 15 (2003): 77–100.

[79] Ibid 98-99.

[80] According to Bourdieu, expressions of taste serve as markers of class distinction. "To the socially recognized hierarchy of the arts, and within each of them, of genres, schools, or periods, corresponds a social hierarchy of consumers. This predisposes tastes to function as markers of class." Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984).

distinction.[81] Occurring at a moment of increased anxiety surrounding the immigration of Asian populations, Gearhart's mastery of the Japanese woodblock tradition can be seen as using the language of othering to gain power and control that might not otherwise be afforded to her as a woman artist during this period.[82] By distributing this print through the PMSC's gift print program, Gearhart entered her work into the private collections of the PMSC's associate members and the permanent collection of the Los Angeles Museum.

In addition to creating connections that allowed her work to enter regional collections, Gearhart's association with the PMSC led to her eventual acquisition by the Smithsonian Institution. After displaying her work in the PMSC's group exhibitions at the Smithsonian, Frances and her sister May received a joint show at the national gallery.[83] This exposure to national audiences as well as art markets along the east coast proved to be particularly fruitful for Frances, as she wrote to the Smithsonian Curator Ruel P. Tolman, "I am very surprised indeed that your sold so many! I did not think Easterners would like our work."[84] Tolman was quick to offer guidance as she navigated the regional specificities of

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[81] Japan pas positioned not as a modern country that existed in the same time and space as Europe and America, but as source of inspiration, an unchanging nation whose associations could be manipulated to serve the needs and desires of European and American consumers. Mari Yoshihaha, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 18.

[82] Passed in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited Chinese immigration to the United States for ten years as many white Americans, particularly in California, attributed the growing unemployment and low wages to the immigration of Chinese whom they thought to be racially inferior. Extended through the Geary Act of 1892, the law was eventually made permanent in 1902, only to be repealed in 1943.

[83] Helena E. Wright, "Appendix A and B" from "A National Audience for Prints: The Smithsonian's Special Exhibition Program 1923-1948," in *North American Prints 1913-1947: An Examination at Century's End*, ed. David Tatham (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006).

[84] Frances Gearhart to Ruel P. Tolman, February 5, 1928, DGA Special Exhibition Files, National Museum of American History.

the different printmaking markets across the United States. "If our [exhibition is any] indication, you ought to attack the eastern market with your prints. Washington has the reputation of being a color town, you should have an agent here."[85] Out of appreciation for Tolman's support, Gearhart gifted the museum with one of her woodblock prints, writing in her letter "I hoped that perhaps you would like to keep [my print] to remind you that Californians appreciated it when a very busy man works hard for them."[86] As a result of the connections Gearhart made through the PMSC, the artist not only gained prominence in her regional art community but also achieved national recognition for her prints. Thus, print clubs can be seen as playing an important role in shaping the collecting practices of both regional and national museums, leading to the acquisition of art by contemporary American women artists.

The Print Letter and Lithography

The PMSC not only provided a space for underrecognized artists such as women printmakers to gain recognition for their work but also encouraged the expansion of fine art printmaking to include more commercial processes such as lithography that had yet to take hold in the United States. One of the primary ways in which the PMSC promoted lithography as a form of fine art distinct from commercial reproduction was through their monthly publication, the *Print Letter*.

The *Print Letter* began in 1922 as a regular publication distributed to PMSC members. Written by club secretary, Howell C. Brown, the first issue contained a list of 134

[85] Ruel P. Tolman to Frances Gearhart, February 27, 1928, DGA Special Exhibition Files 1925-1926, National Museum of American History.

[86] Gearhart to Tolman, February 5, 1928.

members and their addresses as well as a brief identifier of their preferred printmaking media. While the membership primarily consisted of etchers, unlike more conservative print clubs of this period, the PMSC counted a handful of block printers and lithographers among their ranks.[87] Brown suggested in an article from 1924 that it was this comparatively open policy that led to their large membership numbers both within the United States and abroad. "Perhaps it was because, from the very first, those composing the society kept themselves free from any local prejudice and welcomed to membership all good artists, known or unknown."[88]

In subsequent issues until its final publication in October 1964, the *Print Letter* included a listing of current exhibitions organized by the PMSC, artist calls, notes from the quarterly member's meeting in Southern California, technical descriptions on printmaking processes, as well as musings from the club's secretary on the state of printmaking as a field of artistic production. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to address the *Print Letter* in its entirety, I will focus the remainder of this section on the publication's treatment of

[87] While blockprinters and lithographers were included, there were no identified screenprinters included in the PMSC's initial rosters. Many regional print clubs specified that etching was the preferred or only printmaking media for members (examples include the Chicago Society of Etchers, the Brooklyn Society of Etchers, Society of American Etchers and more), this range of printmaking techniques for PMSC points to both the international focus of the club and the diversity of the club's membership as they were not trying to replicate the European painter-movement in the United States. Howell C. Brown, "Active Members," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California* 1, no. 1 (1922).

[88] Brown, "The Print Makers Society of Southern California." Beyond this membership list, the first issue included a call for content for the Print Letter. "If anyone has notes of general interest to the print world the Secretary will be glad to receive them and they will be included in the letter as space permits." The fluidity of the Print Letter at this early stage reveals two important aspects of the PMSC as it established itself. The first is that despite many of their members being artists themselves, the club was not trying to position its membership as solely for existing printmakers. Instead, the PMSC can be clearly seen as moving to incorporate more and more associate, or non-artist members. The second is the inclusion of the term "print world." Already the PMSC and *Print Letter* it published had large goals of speaking to a global audience of print makers and enthusiasts.

lithography to demonstrate that the PMSC, as an institution, supported the definition of the media as a fine art, further developing the infrastructure that allowed lithography to flourish along the West Coast during the 1960s.

The *Print Letter* regularly contained practical advice for both artists and collectors. During his tenure as editor of the Print Letter, Brown focused on promoting lithography for these two audiences.[89] Addressing his fellow artist-members, Brown wrote in his 1931 article in the *Print Letter*, "A Plea for the Lithograph," "if any one of our members has not tried this medium he will be both amazed and delighted with its wonderful flexibility and capability of expressing the artists [sic] thoughts."[90] Using a similar language to nineteenth century celebrations of etching as a process that has the ability to capture the artist's hand; here, the lithograph is able to express the artist's thoughts.[91] By emphasizing lithography's expressive ability, Brown placed the technique on same level as etching, the preferred printmaking process of many PMSC members. At the same time Brown expounded on the virtues of the medium, he also suggested that there are few collectors in the market for fine

[89] Topics ranged from collector oriented articles such as "How to Care for Prints" from 1926 to those directed specifically at printmakers submitting to the PMSC's annual exhibitions such as "Mats and Matting" from 1934. Howell C. Brown, "How to Care for Prints," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, 1926; Howell C. Brown, "Mats and Matting," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, 1934.

[90] Howell C. Brown, "A Plea for the Lithograph," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, 1931.

[91] During the so-called "Etching Revival" printers, collectors and dealers touted the expressive quality of the etched line as well as its ability to capture the artist's hand as compared to the engraving technique. It is interesting to note that this language is again used to distinguish fine art lithography from its commercial uses during the 1930s. For a further discussion of the Etching Revival see Cynthia Burlingham, "Revivals and Modernity: The Printed Image in Nineteenth-Century France," *Noir: The Romance of Black in Nineteenth-Century French Drawings and Prints* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016).

art lithographs, stating that "if they [collectors] would only study them a little, I feel sure that their next step would be to want some for themselves."[92]

In later articles on the lithography process, Brown went so far as to celebrate the commercial origins of lithographic printing. "All of this sounds very commercial, and it is, but the tempo of modern life makes such mass-work necessary. One of the very important developments brought about by off-set lithography is the inexpensive printing… [creating artworks] that would otherwise be beyond the pursue of the ordinary man."[93] Recognizing commercial printing as the gateway for producing more affordable and accessible prints as a critical aspect of modernity, Brown's statement complicates the division between modern and conservative printmaking organizations that has limited much of the scholarship on print clubs.

Even under a new editor and board of control, the *Print Letter* continued to extol the virtues of lithography as an explicitly modern technique. The first issue of the 1960-1961 run of the *Print Letter* highlighted lithography's ability to "meet the demands of the populace."[94] The artist Chang Reynolds claimed, "lithography, as a fine print medium and as a commercial printing tool, had found its place in this one hundred years of social, economic, and political reform…[filling] both a creative and communicative need."[95] Therefore, the PMSC's advocacy for lithography for both artists and collectors can be seen

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Howell C. Brown, "More about Lithography," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California* XXI, no. 3 (March 1943).

[94] Chang Reynolds, "Lithography in the Nineteenth Century," ed. Ethel B. Davis, *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California* XLI, no. 1 (Season -1961 1960).

[95] Ibid.

as a critical aspect for establishing both interest in and a technical awareness of lithography throughout Southern California. Thus, prior to the proliferation of the media during the 1960s, print clubs laid a groundwork of support for the medium, further questioning the framing of the medium's boom in Southern California as a moment of rupture rather than one of regional continuity.[96]

PMSC's Exhibition Program

Another keyway in which the PMSC supported the development of printmaking practices in Southern California during the early and mid-twentieth century was through exhibitions. Brown described the club's exhibition history in an issue of the *Print Letter* from 1934:

> We began with the plan of giving two exhibits a year. One during March in the Los Angeles Museum, known as the Spring Exhibit, and another which would start out in November and go over the state. It was a hard struggle at first. The public knew little about prints and cared less, and we had to persuade cities to receive this exhibit. But we stuck to it and by means of talks, demonstrations and continual exhibits awakened an interest in what we were doing.[97]

Founded and directed by artists, these exhibitions served as means of promoting their own work. Other print clubs such as the Chicago Society of Etchers both produced similar traveling exhibitions and aligned themselves with major regional collections such as the Art

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[96] See Susan Tallman, *The Contemporary Print: From Pre-Pop to Postmodern* (New York: Thames and Hudson Inc., 1996); Trudy V. Hansen et al., eds., *Printmaking in America: Collaborative Prints and Presses 1960-1990* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers in Association with Mary and Leigh Block Gallery Northwestern University, 1995). The PMSC's support of lithography through the *Print Letter* was coupled by an enormous investment in lithography by the federal government through Federally sponsored printmaking workshops. This is largely contrary to the narratives presented at the founding of several lithography workshops during the 1960s including those highlighted by the June Wayne in her initial funding proposal to the Ford Foundation to fund the Tamarind Institute in 1959. Tamarind Institute, "The Tamarind Papers: TTP.," *The Tamarind Papers : TTP.*, 1978.

[97] Brown, "Mats and Matting."

Institute of Chicago.[98] However, the PMSC and the Brown brothers' efforts on the West Coast have received considerably less scholarly attention.

For the first five years of the PMSC, their exhibitions consisted entirely of prints by active members. Focusing on libraries, museums, and galleries, these traveling exhibitions used institutional spaces often associated with educational programing to promote printmaking as a form of fine art distinct from commercial reproduction. This locational indexing presented both of the club's larger goals, the recognition of printmaking as a fine art and the sale of the prints, as public educational initiatives. One exhibition announcement discussed the structure of the PMSC's exhibition plans, "the prints are for sale, priced by the artists. No fee is asked the exhibiting galleries, only expressage is required."[99] Here, note that all locations, whether women's centers, libraries or museums were called galleries while all participants no matter their status as amateur, professional, or commercial were distinguished as artists.

In discussing the goals of these smaller, traveling exhibitions, Brown suggested that it was the PMSC's mission to both demonstrate and educate American visitors on a definition of the beautiful through prints. "We believe that, deep down in the heart of the American people, there is an inherent love of the beautiful which needs only to be awakened, and with this belief in mind the Society has continually circulated collections of prints."[100] As with other print clubs during this period, the PMSC relied on notions of the

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[98] See Patterson, *Bertha E. Jaques and the Chicago Society of Etchers*.

[99] "The Print Makers Society of California, Box 1 Folder 2, Histories," n.d., California Society of Printmakers Records, BANC MSS 88/53 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[100] Brown, "The Print Makers Society of Southern California."

beautiful to demonstrate that the goals of their exhibitions were not merely for the financial support of its artist members, but to foster an informed and engaged public.[101]

For Brown, artists had an obligation to create beautiful art as it both allowed for an entry point for the public into the art world and elevated the everyday lives of their audiences.

> We have always contended, and always will, that if the artist wants the "general public" to love and buy art they must meet it half-way. That does not mean that he must debase his art to produce something that will sell, far from it but he can, if he is willing, produce really good art and at the same time create something that will add a touch of beauty to some life, otherwise dull and commonplace.[102]

Here, beauty is both the guise through which artists can disseminate their vision and an elevating factor in a person's life. Promoting an idea of the beautiful through these exhibition spaces both within museum contexts and at civic organizations, the PMSC presented knowledge about the beautiful as a means for the middle class to distinguish themselves from the "commonplace." [103]

While the PMSC continued to circulate exhibitions to regional civic organizations, they also began holding one of their annual exhibitions at the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science, and Art in the Gallery of Fine and Applied Arts in 1916. Each year the

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[101] To this end, Brown offered to organize exhibitions of prints by PMSC members as needed to fill exhibition space for the museum in a letter to the museum secretary Mary E. Marsh. "I have the interests of the Museum so much at heart that I am sure we can always pull together… If at any time in your extension work you have a call for collections of prints I can always arrange you a show of any size at short notice, either in color prints of black and white." Howell C. Brown to Mary E. Marsh, September 14, 1920, Art Department of the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art Correspondence ART.001.001: Box 31 Folder 11.

[102] Howell C. Brown, "Art for the Public," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California* XIII, no. 8 (1935).

[103] Chapter three of this dissertation builds on this discussion to further explore the promotion of the beautiful as a means for creating class distinctions through print clubs.

annual spring at the Los Angeles Museum exhibition grew steadily with seven members in 1916, thirteen members participating in 1917, nineteen in 1918, and forty in 1919.[104] The Museum's first director Frank S. Daggett recognized the importance of these exhibitions and the growing role the PMSC played in the Los Angeles community in a letter to Brown from 1918. "Allow me to thank the members of The Print Makers of Los Angeles… I am pleased to note that each year the exhibition is of greater importance and interest, and I feel now that the Print Makers have established themselves permanently and may be considered one of the strong art influences in the community."[105]

In 1920, the PMSC renamed their annual spring exhibition, The First International Print Makers Exhibition. The show included the work of printmakers from across the globe, no matter their membership status or preferred printmaking technique. The call for participants announced, "all workers in any kind of etching, lithography, block printing and wood engraving are cordially invited to contribute."[106] Running for the entire month of March, the First International Exhibition contained over 470 works by over 185 artists from

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[104] "Second Annual Spring Exhibit of the Print Makers of Los Angeles" (Museum of History, Science and Art, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Ca., July 15, 1916), Copy in the New York Public Library Print Collection.

"Third Annual Spring Exhibit of the Print Makers of Los Angeles" (Museum of History, Science and Art, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Ca., March 31, 1917), Copy in the New York Public Library Print Collection; "Fourth Annual Sprint Exhibit of the Print Makers of Los Angeles" (Museum of History, Science and Art, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Ca., March 15, 1918), Copy in the New York Public Library Print Collection; "The Print Makers of Los Angeles, Fifth Annual Exhibition" (Museum of History, Science and Art, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Ca., March 3, 1919), Copy in the New York Public Library Print Collection.

[105] Frank S. Daggett to Howell C. Brown, April 4, 1918, Art Department of the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art Correspondence ART.001.001: Box 31 Folder 11.

[106] "The First International Print Makers Exhibition under the Auspices of the Print Makers of Los Angeles."

the across the United States, Canada, England, Italy, and France. The *Los Angeles Times*' announcement for the show celebrated the many international artists who were included. "The eyes of the art world will be turned upon Los Angeles in March, when the first international exhibition of etchings and kindred prints will be held here under the auspices of the Print Makers of Los Angeles. The exhibition [is] the first of its kind in the West."[107] This new direction for the annual exhibition can be seen as part of the PMSC's interest in orienting their club internationally, running contrary to many of the tropes of printmaking in California that have been frequently repeated in both period criticism and later scholarship.[108]

The 1920 International Exhibition featured works by prominent PMSC members including Frances H. Gearhart as well as figures from the larger network of American print clubs such Bertha E. Jaques of the Chicago Society of Etchers. The exhibition catalogue sectioned off prints by artists labeled, "moderns," reflecting the more conservative nature of print clubs. While this stylistic preference has led many scholars to dismiss the role print clubs played in supporting and maintaining audiences for modern printmaking practices, it is critical to turn to the actual ways in which the prints were divided to reveal a more nuanced understanding of the opposition between conservative and modern that played out in the space of the print club.[109]

In the First International Print Makers Exhibition, eight artists were sectioned off from the rest and given the designation "moderns." The following preface appeared in the

[107] "All Lands Contribute to Etching Exhibition," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1920.

[108] For example see Acton, "Printmaking Communities in Southern California, 1900-1960."

[109] This positioning of the PMSC as a strictly conservative organization can be seen in Acton.

catalogue before their work, "while the Jury is not in sympathy with the so-called modern movement, they feel that it should have a place in the exhibit and have chosen the following prints to represent it."[110] Of the eight artists selected as "moderns," all worked in color woodblock and many without a key block. For example, Ethel Mars's *La Terrace* from c.1913 (figure 7) was relegated to the modern section while Arthur Wesley Dow's *Willows and the Moon* from ca. 1917 (figure 9) was deemed conservative and included in the general catalogue.

Comparing both prints, we can see the two artists both used the woodblock technique to create large swaths of brightly colored ink. However, Mars's work lacks the characteristic dark outlining of forms that occurs through the use of a key block present in Dow's print. Using both a key block and a gentle fading of color seen in the transition from orange to green on the trees that draws from the Japanese tradition of bokashi, Dow demonstrated an understanding of traditional Japanese printmaking techniques while Mars was not interested in making such technical connections with her printmaking practice. While neither artist can be considered a strict modernist, Dow's print demonstrates his interest in manipulating color and line, two essential aspects of his work which greatly influenced a generation of modern American artists.[111] Mars's print, on the other hand, uses a nontraditional approach to a printmaking process while remaining firmly entrenched in traditional depictions bourgeois life.

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[110] "The First International Print Makers Exhibition under the Auspices of the Print Makers of Los Angeles."

[111] For a further investigation of Dow's work see Nancy E. Green, *Arthur Wesley Dow and American Arts and Crafts* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1999).

This more nuanced understanding of the "modern" categorization can also be seen when comparing Pablo Picasso's *Mother at Her Toilette* from 1905 published in 1913 (figure 9) which was marked as conservative through its inclusion in the PMSC's general catalogue, while Blanche Lazzell's *Still Life* was deemed "modern." While I have yet to locate the artist's *Still Life*, Lazzell's *Tulips* also from 1920 (figure 10) provides a comparable print to investigate. Picasso used the etching technique in his *Mother at Her Toilette* to explore the domestic life of the artist's Saltimbanques figures. While the itinerate circus performer holds a child, a nude woman stands facing the viewer frontally, craning her neck to brush her hair in the mirror to the side. The undone bedsheets in the center of the composition connect the two figures to present a view into the modern lives of the artists and performers. Lazzell's print, on the other hand, presents a still life of a bowl of tulips. Printed without a key block seen in the subtle white lines between the areas of color, the print highlights the composition's bold, graphic colors.

While Picasso's print presents a distinctly modern subject, it was created using a traditional etching technique. In comparison, Lazzell's conservative still life deviated from traditional block printing techniques. Therefore, we can see that the PMSC's division between traditional and modern was more nuanced, routed not in art historical definitions of the modern but in technical discussions of differing approaches to printmaking techniques. Using the language of conservative vs. modern the PMSC's emphasis on technique rather than subject matter allowed a greater number of American artists to be shown on the same level as their international counterparts.

Over the next eighteen years, the PMSC held their International Exhibition at the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science, and Art.[112] Calls for submissions were sent out to PMSC members through the *Print Letter* and to international participants through the Los Angeles Museum.[113] During the interwar period, international printmakers participated in the annual exhibition in large numbers.[114] Seen as a particular strength of the PMSC's exhibitions, the combination of artists from different countries created informed, cosmopolitan museum visitors and artists in the Southern California region at a moment of increasing international tension. One unpublished review of the 1920 exhibition stated:

> In these days of hazy thinking and national misunderstandings, it is well to stop and think what an exhibition of this kind means. Such a show allows anyone a genuine opportunity to find out if he wishes, how other peoples look at life... The writer contends that exhibitions where the work of many nations is gathered is of greater educational and cultural value and leads to deeper national understanding than many things more spectacular and higher sounding. Sevenson well expressed this thought when he said, "It is by trying to understand others that we learn to understand ourselves."[115]

Thus, international exhibitions such as those organized by the PMSC provided American artists an opportunity to not only see their work in a larger, international context but also

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[112] The last annual March exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science, and Art was in 1938; however, the club maintained a relationship with the museum over the subsequent years through print donations.

[113] Art Department of the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art Correspondence Box 4 Folder 1-2 and Box 5 Folder 6 both include notes on international submissions directly to the museum for the International Exhibitions.

[114] In a 1928 issue of the *Print Letter*, Brown announced to members that, "entry blanks are already coming in from countries outside of the United States and are from the interest being shown this international bids fair to be one of the best we have had." Howell C. Brown, "Ninth International," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California* VI, no. 4 (January 1928).

[115] "Impressions of a Print Show," 1920-1922, Art Department of the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art Correspondence Box 4 Folder 1-2, 2nd and 3rd International Print Makers Exhibition (EX.197, EX.218). This unpublished and unsigned review of the exhibition was likely written by the museum's first director Frank S. Daggett.

define an American approach to printmaking, a critical aspect of regionalism that took hold during the 1930s.

The PMSC's annual international exhibitions also brought a growing number of visiting artists and collectors to the Los Angeles region to celebrate contemporary international printmaking. In 1923, Brown described this increasing public interest in the international exhibitions and printmaking more broadly.

> The Fourth International Exhibition has just closed after a very successful month. The Los Angeles public is taking more interest every year in this collection of prints, as is shown by the increased attendance. On one Sunday afternoon, between the hours of two and five, nine thousand one hundred people visited the gallery, and the daily average of attendance was one thousand, so that we can safely say that thirty thousand people saw the pictures during the month.[116]

These impressive visitor numbers suggest the enthusiasm in the Southern California region for temporary exhibitions and large community events. The visitor count also suggests a growing familiarity with printmaking among local audiences returning year after year to the annual exhibition.

The Los Angeles art critic Anthony Anderson's review of the Seventh Annual International Exhibition highlighted this regional knowledge of international printmaking practices and encouraged local visitors to return multiple times to see the nearly four hundred fifty prints on display.

> If you are wise, you will study the exhibition in sections, going to Exposition Park many times for that laudable purpose. England which sent in 150 prints, will give you enough to do for one afternoon. The United States and Canada, with 200 and more will keep you busy another trip. This makes 350 prints. The remaining 100 will make up your third venture into art appreciation.

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[116] Howell C. Brown, "The Fourth International Exhibition," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California* 1, no. 7 (April 1923).

> These 100 were contributed by Australia, Austria, Belgium, Czecho-Slovakia [sic], France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Sweden.[117]

Containing many works by international artists that encouraged multiple, repeat visits, the PMSC's International Exhibitions followed the popular model of world's fair expositions in California.[118]

The *Los Angeles Times* art critic Arthur Millier described the PMSC's annual international exhibitions' influence on the region's enthusiastic support for printmaking in 1931. "March is print month in Southern California. For twelve years the Los Angeles Museum has been the scene of the Printmakers International Exhibition, held under the auspices of the Printmakers Society of California, and more recently other art galleries have come to supplement this large showing with further groups of prints."[119] Creating an entire month in which the arts organizations in Los Angeles were abuzz with prints demonstrates both the regional market and the institutional support for contemporary printmaking that the PMSC helped to develop in the Southern California region.[120]

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[117] Anthony Anderson, "Of Art and Artists," *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1926.

[118] While international expositions had been held in San Diego and San Francisco, Los Angeles had yet to host such a large-scale display. The Midwinter International Exposition was held in San Francisco in 1894, The Panama California International Exposition in San Diego in 1917, The Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915, The California Pacific International Exposition in San Diego in 1936, and The Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco in 1940. For a further exploration of International Expositions in California see Carolyn Peter, "California Welcomes the World: International Expositions, 1894-1940 and the Selling of A State," in *Reading California: Art, Image, and Identity 1900-2000*, ed. Stephanie Barron (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2000).

[119] Arthur Millier, "Prints Feature of March," *Los Angeles Times*, March 15, 1931.

[120] The PMSC was not alone in sponsoring exhibitions at the Los Angeles Museum. Many local clubs encouraged the Museum's first art curator, Everett C. Maxwell, to allow the museum to host their annual member exhibitions. According to historian and journalist Suzanne Muchnic's history of LACMA, Maxwell did not have the training or interest needed to make a significant impact during his three year curatorial term at the museum and "succumbed to the pressure of provincial art clubs that needed space to show their members' work." The relationship between the Los Angeles museum

As part of the annual PMSC International Exhibition at the Los Angeles Museum, artists were eligible for prizes for their submissions. Judged by a jury that typically included one representative from the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and one judge from the PMSC, the committee granted Gold, Silver, and Bronze metals as well as other named prizes for achievements in printmaking.[121] Local civic and private organizations ranging from the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce to railroad tycoon Mr. and Mrs. Henry E. Huntington also sponsored prizes for the winners. Of these honors, The Huntington Prize was the largest cash prize worth one hundred dollars.[122] Other prizes such as the PMSC's Silver and Bronze Medals, came with the honor of being subsequently donated to the Los Angeles Museum.

Working directly with The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and the newly founded Los Angeles Museum, the PMSC's exhibitions and subsequent donations to the museum can be seen as occupying a space between Progressive Era ideals and the commercial boosterism that thrived in Southern California during the 1920s.[123] Providing

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and the PMSC was formalized in 1914 at a Board of Governors meeting that allowed at least six local clubs to host their annual exhibitions at the Los Angeles Museum. While Maxwell supervised the exhibitions, the Los Angeles Museum made clear that "the Board of Governors and the Art Committee shall not be responsible in any way for such exhibitions, except to assist in every way they can to make the show a success." Thus, California's regional art clubs inserted themselves into the space of the Los Angeles Museum as part of their club's larger educational initiatives. It was not until 1931 that the Los Angeles Museum hired its next full-time art curator. Suzanne Muchnic, *LACMA So Far: Portrait of A Museum in the Making* (San Marino: Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, 2015) 20-21.

[121] Jury members and PMSC officers were not eligible for these annual awards. *The Fifteenth International Print Makers Exhibition* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Museum, 1934).

[122] Anderson, "Of Art and Artists."

[123] As discussed in in Chapter 3, print clubs were not actively engaged in progressive reform, but their organization of social spaces often led by women focused on educational and beautification initiatives can be seen as a parallel efforts. For a further investigation of the Progressive Era reform movement see, Laura R. Fisher, *Reading for Reform: The Social Work of Literature in the Progressive Era* (Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota Press, 2019).

the curatorial and organizational support to ensure the museum both exhibited prints and started a fine art print collection, the PMSC played a critical role in the institutionalization of the museum as a space for shaping informed citizens and defining the culture of Southern California.[124]

Associate Print Collection at the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science, and Art

In addition to organizing and hosting annual exhibitions at the Los Angeles Museum, the PMSC also donated prints to establish a permanent collection of contemporary fine art prints in the Southern California region. In 1924, the PMSC established the Associate Print Fund to purchase contemporary prints for the Los Angeles Museum, the majority of which had been first exhibited at the club's International Exhibitions.[125] By the end of the 1920s, the PMSC set aside ten percent of their associate member dues for this fund.[126] Brown praised the associate members' fundraising efforts for these purchases in the May 1924 issue of the *Print Letter*, "this collection is gradually growing and you are thus helping to preserve good work for future generations."[127] Referring to the associate members as a collection of civic-minded philanthropists, Brown underscores the importance the PMSC and their members saw in establishing a prominent works-on-paper collection in Los Angeles.

While a comprehensive analysis of all prints donated to the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science, and Art by the PMSC is both beyond the preview of this paper and

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[124] Trask, *Things American: Art Museums and Civic Culture in the Progressive Era*.

[125] Howell C. Brown, "Associate Print Collection," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, May 1924.

[126] Howell C. Brown, "Prints Added to the Museum's Permanent Collection," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, April 1929.

[127] Brown, "Associate Print Collection."

difficult to determine given the incomplete records of the early museum, I will turn to a representative selection of three works from this collection to investigate the ways in which the PMSC both shaped the Los Angeles Museum's permanent collection demonstrated their support for contemporary printmakers more broadly.[128] This chapter will perform a close study of three prints by Clare Leighton, Lily Blatherwick, and Birger Svén Sandzén. Through my analysis of these selected works, I establish how the club shaped the museum's collection to support their own commitments to California boosterism, the PMSC's artist members, and regionalism in American art. Focusing on the work of two women artist, I demonstrate that print clubs provided institutional support of the acquisition of art by contemporary women artists from the founding of the Los Angeles Museum.

The first such work I will address is Clare Leighton's *Brother Juniper* (figure 11) which was donated by the Associate Members of the PMSC in 1930. At the Eleventh International Print Makers Exhibition earlier that year, Leighton displayed two prints, *Boston Cod* (figure 12) on sale for twenty dollars and *Brother Juniper* for fifteen.[129] While the two wood engravings demonstrate Leighton's characteristic mastery over the technically difficult printmaking technique, their distinct subjects offer some insights into why *Brother Juniper* was selected over *Boston Cod*. *Brother Juniper* likely depicts the Franciscan priest, Junipero Serra who came to Mexico and later California from Spain on a colonizing mission in 1749. Junipero Serra was part of the Spanish colonization of the California coast and a

[128] LACMA retained approximately 50 prints donated by the PMSC. Given covid related closures, it is difficult to determine if there were a larger number of works that have since been deaccessioned or did not make the transition from the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science, and Art to LACMA.

[129] "The Eleventh Intrnational Print Makers Exhibition" (Print Makers Society of California, Los Angeles Museum, March 1, 1930).

leader of the violent seizure of native land through the mission project. In her print, Leighton depicted Junipero Serra seated in a rocky desert landscape. Folding his hands, Junipero Serra looks out into the distance, contemplating the empty expanse of landscape that surrounds him. This romanticized vision of California's colonial past perpetuated a false idea of the western landscape as a place devoid of people, open for limitless possibilities.

Leighton's *Boston Cod* on the other hand, depicted a contemporary scene of labor. In *Boston Cod*, Leighton creates a bustling dock in which fisherman pile up their daily catches. At the center of the pyramidal composition, one worker stands with his hat tilted back, almost groaning with exhaustion at the day's labors. While the California specific narrative of Leighton's *Brother Juniper* would have likely been appealing for the potential acquisition, it is important to note that the sympathetic portrayal of laborers in *Boston Cod* was much more representative of Leighton's printmaking practice; however, it was not the work selected to enter the collection. Choosing *Bother Juniper* for the permanent collection at the Los Angeles Museum, the PMSC furthered practices within the California booster movement that ignored the harsh realities of the state's missions and sentimentalized the colonial legacy within the region.[130]

In addition to selecting works that featured images of the California landscape and its history for the Los Angeles Museum's permanent collection, the PMSC also donated works by their artist members. Of note, is the strong representation of women artists that were donated to the museum as part of the Associate Print Collection. For example, of the identifiable prints from this collection still at LACMA, 30% are by women artists, a sizable

[130] See Sheri Bernstein, "Selling California, 1900-1920," 90-94 for a further exploration of California boosterism as it relates to the California missions.

portion considering women artists often struggled to receive institutional support during this period.[131] One such artist was the British lithographer Lily Blatherwick, whose *Iris* entered the Los Angeles Museum's collection as a gift of the PMSC in 1924 (figure 13).

Based in England, Blatherwick exhibited with the PMSC's International Exhibitions annually from 1920 until 1929. While she was not a dues paying member for her first exhibition, Blatherwick went on to join the PMSC in 1923, remaining active until 1929.[132] Blatherwick's *Iris* used lithography to create a dramatic floral study. Contrasting two bands of light shading on either side of the print, Blatherwick placed her flower at the composition's dark-black center. This organization allowed the artist to highlight the sketch-like quality of the lithography medium while also experimenting with technique seen in the scratching and rubbing used to depict the flower's petals as the recede into the darkness. Through this acquisition among numerous others, the PMSC demonstrated their interest in supporting women artists who became members of the club.

In this final case study of a work donated to the museum by the PMSC, I will explore how the print club demonstrated a commitment to the regional art movement in the United States. The Kansas-based printmaker Birger Sven Sandzén's *Arroyo with Trees* from 1925, first shown in the 1926 International Exhibition, is representative of such prints (figure 17). Sandzén began exhibiting with the PMSC in 1920, going on to show regularly at the club's

[131] Data gained from TMS reports conducted by Claudine Dixon. Claudine Dixon to Sarah Bane, "Re:Research Question," April 5, 2021.

[132] White, 19.

annual exhibitions until 1936.[133] While chapter two details Sandzén's involvement with the Prairie Print Makers (PPM), it is critical to include a discussion of Sandzén's relationship with the PMSC to establish the ways in which American printmakers used regional print clubs and their exhibitions to create networks of support for a regionalist vision of American art. Many printmakers based in Kansas including Arthur and Norma Basset Hall as well as C.A. Seward who would all go on to found the PPM, joined Sandzén in sending their work to the PMSC's International Exhibitions during the 1920s and 1930s. These exhibitions provided a national support network for these regional artists that extended beyond their own states. For some, the PMSC's international exhibitions even led to their first purchase by a major museum outside of their home states.[134]

In *Arroyo with Trees*, Sandzén creates an expressionist vision of his local landscape. Using the lithographic crayon to create swirling, layered patterns seen in the rocky outcropping in the foreground, Sandzén's print has an almost sketch-like quality. Sandzén used varying degrees of pressure when drawing on the lithographic stone to create depth that extends from the strong-bountiful tree branches of the foreground to the subtle wisps of clouds behind. While Sandzén used the sketchy quality of the lithographic line to create this expressionistic view, the central grouping of trees and rocks that lies in the immediate foreground serves to root the viewer in place, tying the print directly to the American

[133] See Anthony R. White, "Index of Annual Exhibitions: 1915-1919 & International Exhibitions 1920-1938, Arranged by Artist and List of Associates' Gift Prints: 1920-1964," 1997, The New York Public Library Print Collection for a complete list.

[134] C.A. Seward's *Somewhere in New Mexico* purchased in 1925 was one such print as it was the first of the artist's pieces to be purchased by a museum outside of Kansas Barbara J. Thompson and Saralyn Reece Hardy, *C.A. Seward: Artist and Draftsman* (Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas, 2011) 16.

landscape. This regionalist approach to the landscape, which contained both recognizable forms and abstract patterning, created both a sense of the familiar while alluding to the more general American experience.[135]

While working in Kansas, the PMSC's acquisition of Sandzén's work demonstrates a shared interest across print clubs in cultivating a regionalist vision that celebrated the geographic diversity of the American landscape and greeted what was seen as the homogenizing effects of urbanization with skepticism.[136] The social theorist Lewis Mumford encouraged artists to turn to depictions of the landscape to create community and achieve a utopian vision of the nation.[137] Therefore, place and the regionalist approach to landscape seen in both the local and national artists that entered into the Los Angeles Museum's collection through the PMSC can be seen as a shared language of the beautiful which both acknowledged regional specificity and aimed at creating national approach to American art.

The PMSC and The Smithsonian's Special Exhibition Program

Regional print clubs not only sought to define a vision of American art through local collections but also used the nascent national collection at the Smithsonian Institution to

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[135] White, "Index of Annual Exhibitions: 1915-1919 & International Exhibitions 1920-1938, Arranged by Artist and List of Associates' Gift Prints: 1920-1964."

[136] Lauren Kroiz describes this impetus that solidified in the regionalist movement of the 1930s as "a profound interest in establishing the importance of place as its singularity seemed to be slipping away. Kroiz, *Cultivating Citizens: The Regional Work of Art in the New Deal Era* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018) 11. Lewis Mumford wrote about these anxieties and what he saw as the movement away from a democratic utopia in his 1922 Text, *The Story of Utopias*. "Today, the whole corpus of knowledge is in an anarchic state, and it lacks order precisely because it lacks any definite relations to the community which creates it, and for which it, in turn, provides the spectacles through which the world is seen." Lewis Mumford, *The Story of Utopias* (United Kingdom: Boni an Liveright, 1922) 108.

[137] "There is a consensus among all utopian writers, to begin with, the land and natural resources belong undividedly to the community." Ibid, 119.

promote their vision of American art. Helena E. Wright's chapter "A National Audience for Prints: The Smithsonian's Special Exhibition program, 1923-1948," provides an excellent history of the Smithsonian's Special Exhibition Program that will not be repeated here.[138] Instead, I will build on Wright's article to call specific attention to the critical role print clubs played in establishing both the national museum's exhibition program and the Smithsonian's collection of prints. Thus, I will demonstrate that regional print clubs aided in the construction of the very idea of what it means to create an American art; the formation of a national consciousness that is at once tied to the local and, at the same time, oriented externally to present an interconnected idea of the nation.

Ruel P. Tolman's special exhibition program invited printmakers and organizations to exhibit at the national museum. Through these exhibitions, Tolman acted almost as a gallerist, bringing national attention to contemporary American artists and facilitating the sale of their work.[139] Wright notes, the secretary of the Chicago Society of Etchers, Bertha M. Jaques, was in frequent contact with Tolman, suggesting printmakers to feature and connecting Tolman to a network of American artists who shared his appreciation of a more conservative approaches to printmaking techniques.[140] In a letter to the administrative assistant to the secretary of the Smithsonian, Tolman wrote that it is through the efforts of not only Jaques but also leaders at the Brooklyn Society of Etchers and the PMSC that the Smithsonian's Graphic Arts Division has received their staunchest support.

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[138] Wright, "A National Audience for Prints: The Smithsonian's Special Exhibition Program 1923-1948."

[139] Unlike a gallery setting, the Smithsonian did not charge a commission. Helena E. Wright, "A National Audience for Prints: The Smithsonian's Special Exhibition Program 1923-1948," 27.

[140] Ibid, 36.

> [The Special Exhibitions] have also given much outside publicity not only through the papers but through the three most active workers, Mr. Will Simmons, secretary of the Brooklyn Society of Etchers, Miss Bertha E. Jaques, Secretary of the Chicago Society of Etchers and Mr. Howell C. Brown, Secretary of the Print Makers of California. These three have collected prints and the division has received about fifty etchings and block prints which have a commercial value of about $1000 and more to follow.[141]

In addition to sending individual prints to the Smithsonian, these three regional print clubs regularly sent group shows to the Smithsonian from the beginning of the special exhibition program in 1923.[142]

Each of these three print societies saw their organizations as both supporting educational initiatives on printmaking in their own regions and defining the growth of the national collection. Tolman highlighted the similarities between each of these clubs in a letter to Will Simmons, the Secretary of the Brooklyn Society of Etchers.

> You certainly are doing a great work for the Museum. The modern section will be looking up when they get all those prints you have collected. Fine. Mrs. Bertha Jaques has volunteered to do some work along the same lines. and [sic] has given us five of her own prints and one in color by Helen Hyde and the original plate and has some more of Miss Hyde's work which Mrs. Gillette is giving. Mr. Howell C. Brown is also doing some missionary work on the coast so with the three most active organizers in this country working for us there is only one conclusion and that is great improvement is soon to take place in this particular division.[143]

This "missionary work" included both sharing an understanding of the technical aspects of printmaking in their respective regions and sending exhibitions of regional printmakers back

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[141] Ruel P. Tolman to William deC. Ravenel, 1923, DGA Special Exhibition Files 1923, National Museum of American History.

[142] In a letter to the artist secretary of the Brooklyn Society of Etchers, Tolman notes that each year, "I am planning to have at least two to the traveling exhibitions of the three American societies." Ruel P. Tolman to Will Simmons, May 20, 1925, DGA Special Exhibition Files 1925-1926, National Museum of American History.

[143] Ruel P. Tolman to Will Simmons, April 19, 1923, DGA Special Exhibition Files- Brooklyn Society of Etchers, National Museum of American History.

to the Smithsonian. Simmons responded to Tolman's letter with a celebration of the centralization occurring through the national museum, "Yes, Mrs. Jaques is OK + a live wire. So is H.C. Brown. You should gather all these isolated chickens… under our wing."[144] Here, we can see that from the inception of the Smithsonian's special exhibitions in the graphic arts, regional print clubs were critical communities to bring into the national museum. These clubs not only represented the regional diversity of the United States, but also created a unified image of the nation as they came together in the space of the Smithsonian's galleries.

Bringing together different regions in the national museum reflected the assistant secretary of the Smithsonian's goals for the Graphic Arts division as stated in 1882. "We are hoping to make the department of graphic arts one of the most instructive in the Museum and we hope to build it up to a degree of completeness which has never been attempted elsewhere"[145] Tolman highlighted this quote in a report to the Smithsonian secretary, establishing a precedent for his special exhibition program that not only highlighted the nation's regional diversity, but also expanded the scope of Smithsonian's growing collection of prints.

Print clubs and their artist members aided in this mission to ensure their work entered the national museum's permanent collection. Despite Tolman's lack of funds for acquisitions, many artists chose to donate their work to the Smithsonian's permanent collection following their successful exhibitions. As discussed previously in this chapter,

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[144] Will Simmons to Ruel P. Tolman, May 17, 1923, DGA Special Exhibition Files Brooklyn Society of Etchers File, National Museum of American History.

[145] Ruel P. Tolman, "General Statement of Work The Division of Th Graphic Arts," n.d., DGA Special Exhibition Files, National Museum of American History.

Frances H. Gearhart was one such artist that thanked Tolman for the sale of her work by encouraging him to keep a print for the national collection.[146] Through her submission to the Smithsonian, Gearhart entered both herself as a Californian artist and the Californian landscape into the national collection. This regionalist approach to collecting reflected the regional diversity of the United States; however, it was in opposition to both modernist collecting practices conducted by private individuals such as Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney and encyclopedic aims for the collection of fine art prints across regions and time periods attempted at museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is particularly important to note that this regionalist vision of American art becomes institutionalized through the influential role print clubs and their members played in sending exhibitions and prints to the national museum. Therefore, regional print clubs can be seen as playing a critical role in supporting printmaking practices not only in their own areas but also for a larger, national audience.

Growth of the PMSC During the Great Depression

The three most prominent regional print clubs built a national network of printmakers and collectors, in part, through their shared interest in developing the Smithsonian's national collection. In addition to sending exhibitions to the Smithsonian, these print clubs circulated shows to one another's regions. In a 1929 issue of the *Print Letter*, Brown suggested that this exhibition network allowed audiences outside of Southern California to become involved with the PMSC. "We raised the members' dues and strove for an associate membership of 350. Due in part by the generous interest taken in us by the Chicago Society of Etchers, we secured the desired Associates and have a waiting list of 17.

[146] Gearhart to Tolman, February 5, 1928.

We are now in a position to affirm our present financial security."[147] As this statement demonstrates, the PMSC entered into the Great Depression in a strong financial position due to this national network of regional print clubs.

While the PMSC's strong financial position likely contributed to their survival during the Great Depression, it is important to note that the organization not merely made it through this dire period but thrived. In the *Print Letter*, one of the first mentions of the Great Depression came in 1932. As part of a regular call to members to ensure the club had the correct addresses for their associate prints, Brown wrote: "while the membership is limited to four hundred the actual number enrolled is constantly fluctuating and if there should be less than four hundred when the prints are ordered we do not like to order and pay for more than we can use. Times are not too easy, and we must be careful. Will you help?"[148] Despite noting that they need to be cautious with spending, Brown is clear to specify that the associate print membership remains strong with nearly four hundred members. Brown reiterates this position of strength in the October-November issue later that year:

> Despite the hard times the society has managed to come through in good shape and not curtail our activities to an appreciable extent…The board of control feels that we should congratulate ourselves on the fine showing that the Society has made. We have kept out of the red, gone ahead with our exhibiting activities and kept our head above water when so many art societies have gone under.[149]

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[147] Howell C. Brown, "Our Finances," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, May 1929.

[148] Howell C. Brown, "Associate Members Please Note," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, 1932.

[149] Howell C. Brown, "To All Members," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California* XI, no. 1,2 (November 1932).

While suggesting that sales of individual prints were not strong, Brown emphasized that the PMSC continued to turn a profit during the Great Depression.

The Depression loomed large throughout the *Print Letter*'s member reports during the 1930s. While individual print sales remained slow, the club continued to grow its associate membership. As we said before, even with hard times, the Associate Membership increased slightly over the last year which goes to show they appreciate what they receive for their dues.[150] Here, Brown signals that membership itself becomes a prized maker of distinction, an expression of good taste. In a 1935, memo "To All Members" Brown continued to celebrate and encourage the growth of the Associate Membership while realizing that purchasing fine art continued to be out of reach for many during the Great Depression. "Interest seems to be increasing in prints once more and our traveling exhibits… are already booked for the whole season. This looks very promising, and we hope will result in a good sales year, although few people, as yet, feel they can afford the pleasure of a work of art."[151]

While the acquisition of a work art might be a far-off possibility for many during the Great Depression, the purchase of a print club membership became a more financially viable marker of distinction for middle- and upper-class consumers. While historian Jasper G. Schad's article, "An Art-Hungry People: The Impact of Progressivism, World War I, and the Panama-Pacific International Exposition on Art in Los Angeles, 1915–1930" addressed rhetoric of distinction surrounding art collecting in Los Angeles prior to the Great

[150] Howell C. Brown, "The Society in General," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, 1933.

[151] Howell C. Brown, "To All Members," *Print Letter of The Print Makers Society of California*, 1935.

Depression, his article focuses almost exclusively on the medium of painting.[152] By retaining media biases that have shrouded art historical scholarship and disregarded the role of prints, Schad's article claims that by the 1930s, "for the most part, people simply lost interest in art."[153] I argue, that rather than a loss of interest in art, audiences in Los Angeles searched for more accessible means of distinction such as print club memberships, when other forms of means of distinction were beyond their reach. As we can see through the rising membership levels during the 1930s, that the marker of distinction moved away from pure ownership and collecting to an association with artistic communities through print club membership that allowed consumers to both signal good taste and class status.

Conclusion

The PMSC played an important role in supporting and promoting audience interest in printmaking as a field of fine art both in the Southern California region and nationally from their founding shortly after the Panama Pacific International Exposition until their closure in October 1964. The PMSC promoted their educational initiatives for the technical and aesthetic understanding of printmaking through newsletters, exhibitions, and the development of national and regional collections of contemporary American prints. This chapter has demonstrated the PMSC's support of women artists through their commissions, exhibitions, and museum acquisitions. Thus, this chapter has revealed that print clubs were an important space for women artists to gain recognition for their work within a male dominated field of artistic production.

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[152] Jasper G Schad, "An Art-Hungry People: The Impact of Progressiveism, World War I, and the Panama Pacific International Exhibition on Art in Los Angeles, 1915-1930," *Southern California Quarterly* 97, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 317–61.

[153] Ibid, 361.

Despite the institutional support the PMSC fostered for nearly fifty years, it is particularly interesting to note that the PMSC closed at a moment of increasing national interest in the media with the arrival of the workshop movement of the 1960s. This shift from the print club to the workshop likely resulted as the club's stylistic preferences remained rooted in conservative approaches to technique and subject matter.[154] However the temporal overlap between the two printmaking organizations is critical to note. Printmakers such as Clinton Adams, who later went on to play a foundational role in the Tamarind Lithography workshop, were well aware of the technical support the PMSC offered to printmakers in the region and likely benefited from these the networks as he established his lithographic practice.[155] June Wayne, the founder of the Tamarind Lithography workshop even exhibited with select regional print clubs.[156] Thus, print clubs become an important aspect for understanding the development of the graphic arts in California, demonstrating a regional continuity of the medium in opposition to prevalent scholarly narratives of rupture.

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[154] For example, in the club's final year, they sent out two gift prints to the associate members, Peter Thorvald Jensen's *El Pueblo Viejo* (figure 15) and Helen Amanda Loggie's *Hosanna*. While I have yet to locate an image of Loggie's print, Jensen's demonstrates the PMSC's continued interest in promoting outdated, conservative approaches to printmaking. Featuring a sentimentalized depiction of a Southwestern or Mexican town, Jensen's print demonstrated the regional printmaking style that was no longer popular with many contemporary artists experimenting in print.

[155] Adams's later publications demonstrate a clear recognition and appreciation of The Print Makers Society of California's work. See Clinton Adams, *The Tamarind Papers: TTP.* (Tamarind Institute, 1991); Clinton Adams, *American Lithographers, 1900-1960* (New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).

[156] Archival documentation reveals Wayne exhibited with the Philadelphia Print Club at the end of the 1950s. Folder 1 Box 28 Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Wayne's funding proposal to the Ford Foundation from 1959 suggested that she wanted to look to European precedents in order to "restore the Art of the Lithograph in the United States." See June Wayne, "The Tamarind Lithography Workshop," *Artist's Proof* 3 (Sprint 1962): 44-46 for a further exploration of how she framed the founding of Tamarind.

Chapter 2: The Prairie Print Makers and Regional Art Communities

Introduction

> *In spite of the years of depression, of turmoil, of war, and now of social and economic unrest, the future of American graphic artists is more full of promise than ever. More and better prints are being produced; print societies and museums have arisen to play an important and necessary role in the cultural life of the community; exhibitions are being sponsored in parts of the country that have never seen prints before. Not only are printmakers of established reputation adding to their laurels, but younger men and women of talent are knocking at the door and in time will doubtless take their place in the hierarchy of the graphic arts. For now, that a definite school, a native tradition of printmaking has been founded, we can truthfully say that the American printmaker has come of age.*[157]

The art critic Albert Reese used these words to describe the thriving communities of artists and collectors devoted to printmaking that grew throughout the United States during the 1930s and 1940s despite the devastating social, economic, and political turmoil Americans faced. One organization that epitomized this growth was the Prairie Print Makers. This print club successfully built and supported a community of artists and print collectors based in Wichita, Kansas during the Great Depression, World War II, and into the 1950s.

The Prairie Print Makers was founded on December 28, 1930, when a group of ten Kansas-based artists and one art dealer gathered at the Lindsborg studio of the artist and teacher Birger Svén Sandzén.[158] Occurring a little over one year after the stock market crash of 1929, the founding and success of this privately funded arts organization during a

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[157] Albert Reese, *American Prize Prints of the 20th Century* (New York: American Artists Group, Inc., 1949) xv.

[158] The club's charter members included Sandzén, C.A. Seward, Charles Capps, Arthur and Norma Bassett Hall, Hershel Logan, Leo Courtney, Clarence Hotvedt, Edmund Kopietz, Llyoyd Foltz, and Carl Smalley.

turbulent period in American history demonstrates the important role print clubs played for American audiences. This chapter builds off recent exhibitions and their related publications on the Prairie Print Makers to explore the organization's work in the context of both the history of American print clubs and the regional art movement during the interwar period.[159]

Selecting the Prairie Print Makers as the case study for this chapter, I build upon recent scholarship on regionalism in American art.[160] I am interested in focusing on what art historian Lauren Kroiz identified as "Midwestern regionalism."[161] For Kroiz, Midwestern regionalism was a "pedagogical project that elevated teaching as a skill and a value even above painting."[162] Examining the shared educational missions of New Deal projects and regionalism, Koitz's text established the movement not only drew upon local, national, and international concerns but also shaped the everyday lives of individuals active in rural

[159] Scholarly interest in the Prairie Print Makers has largely been concentrated in the wonderful work conducted by curators based in three of Kansas' most important museums, the Wichita Art Museum, the Sandzén Memorial Gallery, and the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art. Three recent texts that reflect this rich visual material based in these Kansas museums are: Barbara J. Thompson O'Neill and George C. Foreman, *The Prairie Print Makes* (Topeka, KS: The Kansas Arts Commission, 1981); Bill North, *The Prairie Print Makers*, ed. Jennifer Cahn (Kansas City, MI: Exhibits USA, Mid America Arts Alliance, 2001); Cori Sherman North, *In the Center of It All: 90 Years of the Prairie Print Makers* (Lindsborg, Kansas: Birger Sandzén Memorial Foundation, 2020).

[160] Much of the scholarship on regionalism focuses on the so-called "Regionalist Triumvirate." See: James M. Dennis, *Renegade Regionalists: The Modern Independence of Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, and John Steuart Curry* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); Erica Doss, *Benton, Pollock and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstraction* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Wanda Corn, "Grant Wood: Uneasy Modern," in *Grant Wood's Studio: Birthplace of American Gothic*, ed. Jane C. Milosch (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, 2005). However, in this chapter I focus on artists who addressed similar period concerns as the Regionalist Triumvirate but did not follow in the stylistic choices most commonly associated with regionalism.

[161] Lauren Kroiz, *Cultivating Citizens: The Regional Work of Art in the New Deal Era* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018) 10.

[162] Ibid 6.

life.[163] Following this model, I explore the educational missions of the Prairie Print Maker's community outreach initiatives as actively participating in the regionalism's central debates on the role of art in the everyday lives of individual Americans. This perspective reveals that print clubs were critical to the development of midwestern expressions of middle-class status during the 1930s and 1940s.

Art historian Jason Weems's study of aerial vision as it defined conceptions of the Midwest has also been influential in shaping my approach to regionalism.[164] For Weems, regionalism was a response to "the anxiety over the eclipse of rural identity in the face of consolidation by mass culture, urbanism, and industrialization."[165] According to Weems the celebration of local geographies through regionalism was "more integrationist than reactionary," as regionalist artists thoughtfully combined the traditional and modern, past and present in a single artistic form.[166] Building off of Weems' example, I examine the Prairie Print Makers' artist members as part of a unified artistic expression of regionalism that was not limited by style, but one that embraced a multitude of technical and artistic approaches to address shared period concerns.

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[163] "This book, without celebrating the regionalists' competitive view of culture or their occasionally romantic view of country living and amateur artists, aims to suggest the potentially radical elements of an aesthetics and scholarship that treats rural farmers in the Midwest as important participants rather than as outsiders." Ibid 12.

[164] Weems presents the following definition of the term regionalism which I will build upon. "'Regionalism' indicates both a generalized notion of processes of thinking anchored in the culture shaped by a specific environment, in this case that of the central prairies, and a more particular set of cultural expressions and political ideals associated with the regionalist movement of the 1920s and 1930s."Jason Weems, *Barnstorming the Prairies: How Aerial Vision Shaped the Midwest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015) xxiv.

[165] Ibid 162.

[166] Ibid 163.

While both Koitz and Weems take an expansive view of regionalism as it was reflected in American visual culture, the "Regionalist Triumvirate," which consisted of the artists Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, and Grant Wood, remain the primary subjects of their analysis. This chapter explores artists who, while aware of the Regionalist Triumvirate, came together to establish their own community of artists focused on the regional production of art rather than a shared style. Understanding the formation of regional art communities through the space of the print club as a didactic project for the development of audiences interested in prints, I suggest that the print club itself is an artistic expression of regionalism. Therefore, I am interested in expanding scholarly understandings of regionalism beyond a stylistic approach to explore the term as it relates to a methodology of making and distribution.

I argue that the Prairie Print Makers promoted a regionalist form of artistic production, positioning fine print collecting as a critical way for middle-class Americans to both respond to period anxieties and demonstrate their status as engaged citizens. Exploring the Prairie Print Maker's gift prints as important tools for entering contemporary printmaking into the middle-class American home, this chapter establishes how the club's distribution of prints built a community of artists and collectors connected across the United States. Focusing on a group of artists who moved freely between the realms of commercial and fine art production, I establish how print clubs both encouraged technical innovation in the media and educated audiences on new printmaking techniques. These regional communities of artists and collectors helped establish a market for fine art printmaking in the United States prior to the contemporary workshop boom.

The National Context for Printmaking and Community Making During the Great Depression

The Interwar Period in the United States brought a renewed interest in using art to both define American democracy and create communities of engaged citizens. This movement has been well documented and discussed in the scholarly literature as it relates to the federally sponsored art programs of the New Deal.[167] This chapter highlights how artists working in privately funded arts organizations responded to these national efforts and sought to expand American audiences for fine art through printmaking.[168]

The national director of the Federal Art Project (FAP), Holger Cahill identified a shift in the way fine art was used in American culture in his essay, "American Resources in the Arts" from 1939. According to Cahill, a growing number of Americans looked to art to create an ideal national culture during the 1930s. "This wide interest in the arts, this democratic sharing of art experience, is a comparatively recent development in American life. It is the devoted work of people who, like John Dewey, believe that democracy should be the name of a life of 'free and enriching communion' in which everyone may have a part."[169] While Cahill's essay goes on to suggest that this relationship between art and community has not yet been achieved in the United States, he states that the arts are increasingly playing an important role in a growing number of American's everyday lives.

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[167] Selected texts include: Joan A. Saab, *For the Millions: American Art and Culture Between the Wars* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2004); Johnathon Harris, *Federal Art and National Culture: The Politics of Identity in New Deal America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Francis V. O'Connor, *Art for the Millions: Essays from the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project* (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1975); Kroiz, *Cultivating Citizens: The Regional Work of Art in the New Deal Era*.

[168] For an investigation of other private arts organizations during this period see: Elizabeth G. Seaton, Jane Myers, and Gail Windisch, eds., *Art for Every Home: Associated American Artists, 1934-2000* (Kansas: Kansas State University, 2015).

[169] Holger Cahill, "American Resources in the Arts," *Art for the Millions: Essays from the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project* Francis V. O'Connor ed. (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1975) 35.

> It is to the creative talent of our own day that we look to provide us with the fresh and unfolding revelation of our country and our people, for the expression of those qualitative unities which make the pattern of American culture. And it is our hope that the philosophers and educators of America, men like John Dewey and the progressive educators who have done so much to release our art resources, will help with their ideas, their example, their strength to provide a better environment for the American artist, to provide wider opportunities for the American people to participate in the experience of art.[170]

For Cahill, it is critical not only for artists to develop a distinctly American art but also build audience interest in contemporary art in the United States.

Prints were celebrated for their ability to reach the American public, making contemporary art accessible to a larger audience. Elizabeth Olds, a New York based artist who was employed by the WPA, celebrated the educational potential of printmaking. Olds suggested that while the average American did not have access to art and was therefore limited in their cultural knowledge, printmaking could fill this role. "Actually, [the average American] is culturally illiterate, because the language of art is a closed book to him, a speech which he has not been taught and of which he has been deprived… To put art on a basis comparable to our free public school system is to make prints by mass production."[171] Olds suggests that the more affordable and portable nature of prints are the ideal way to build a "visually literate" American audience.

Olds also encouraged artists to expand edition sizes, thereby reducing the price of an individual print. "By printing the picture by thousands instead of tens, we can produce it at a price millions can afford--prices comparable to the nineteenth-century democratic, popular

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[170] Ibid 44.

[171] Elizabeth Olds, "Prints for Mass Production," in *Art for the Millions: Essays From the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project*, ed. Francis V. O'Connor (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1973), 143.

prices of Currier and Ives. The question remains: How can cheap, popular-priced, mass-produced print and the public be brought together?"[172] Earlier in her essay, Olds claimed that prints in the United States were either distributed through the WPA to public institutions or privately through art dealers. Overlooking regional print clubs and other private arts organizations that distributed prints demonstrates the powerful role established galleries played in the distribution of art, particularly in her hometown of New York City. For regional audiences, however; the consumption and distribution of art was not calcified within a gallery system. Instead, fluid regional printmaking networks allowed for a greater range of responses to the question of how to bring together American audiences and American art through printmaking.

Aline Kistler, the editor of the journal *Prints*, noted that movement towards expanded edition sizes and regional distribution networks was polarizing within the established printmaking community. "Comment and argument run high as people discuss a new print business venture that is championed by some as the birth of a new era and decried by others as the beginning of the end of all that artists and connoisseurs hold dear. Personally, I see no crisis."[173] Directly addressing the work of the American Artists Group, an organization which published unsigned and unlimited editions of by contemporary printmakers, Kistler suggested that these new marketing schemes were simply a way to push the boundaries of the art market.[174]

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[172] Ibid 144.

[173] Aline Kistler, "New Market Trends," *Prints* 7, no. 1 (October 1936): 31–36.

[174] Ibid, 35.

The American Artist Group was one such organization that looked to distribution networks outside of traditional gallery systems to position printmaking as a "democratic" art. The American Artist Group produced unlimited print runs of unsigned works available for two dollars and seventy-five cents as compared to the five dollars charged by many print clubs. Making original works of art more affordable, they proclaimed that their mission was to expand American's visional literacy. One of the organization's catalogues announced: "pictures, that is to say prints, should be as free and purchasable as books; and when the owner is tired of them he should put them away and replenish his stock."[175] Comparing prints to a consumer good that would be seen as essential to the middle-class home, a print collection became an important means through which individuals displayed a shared sense of education and class identity. Claiming that their movement towards unsigned and unlimited editions would transform the sale of fine art in the United States, the American Artist Group saw their efforts as revolutionizing the entirety of the art market.

> The art critics welcomed the American Artists Group's efforts to end the reign of preciousness and restore the older sway of democracy in the graphic arts…Any movement of this kind requires courage and must expect to go against the habits of a familiar practice. Yet the basis for this return to an early tradition is solid and the idea of the popular print has as much meaning today, if not more than it ever had. Through this easy and inexpensive approach, there should be powerful persuasion to lead large numbers of people to that most fascinating pursuit, the collecting the art of one's own country.[176]

[175] "Original Etchings, Lithographs, and Woodcuts Published by the American Artists Group, Inc.," 1937, The New York Public Library Print Collection: Astor Lenox and Tilden Foundation (4).

[176] Ibid, 5-6.

This nationalistic approach to print collecting underscores the larger period concerns with establishing a shared American culture in opposition to traditional European forms of art making.

While the American Artists Group was one the most extreme examples of the new distribution methods, private arts organizations explored a variety of new methods to put an increasing number of prints into the hands of American consumers. One such organization that has been well documented is the Associated American Artists (AAA). The publicist and entrepreneur Reeves Lewenthal founded AAA in 1934. Pricing their prints at five dollars each, AAA sought to expand print collecting practices to the American middle class.[177] AAA used innovative marketing strategies such as mail-order catalogues and department store displays to reach their target audience. According to art historian Gail Windisch, AAA published upwards of sixty-five new editions a year, choosing works that Lewenthal thought would be particularly profitable based on their more accessible subject matter and style.[178]

For works that met these aesthetic specifications, Lewenthal frequently turned to artists working in a regionalist style. Art historian Elizabeth Seaton suggested that this marketing relationship proved to be particularly beneficial to the Regional Triumvirate, as

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[177] AAA stated their founders' initial goal was to "come together to plan the part they could take in a national movement directed to stimulate the wider public interest in the ownership of fine works of art." Gail Windisch, "Delivering Art to American Homes: Associated American Artists and the Two Men Who Shaped It, 1934-1984," Elizabeth G. Seaton, Jane Myers, and Gail Windisch, eds., *Art for Every Home: Associated American Artists, 1934-2000* (Kansas: Kansas State University, 2015) 23.

[178] Ibid 42. Elizabeth G. Seaton's essay from the same catalogue compared art produced in the federally sponsored workshops with that created by AAA to demonstrate how the organization's sales model impacted the eventual works that were printed. "Consumer democracy did not provide a space for radicalism and abstraction in the same way that cultural democracy did in the WPA-FAP." Elizabeth G. Seaton, "Cultural Democracy/Consumer Democracy" New Deal Printmaking and Associated American Artists, 1934-43," Elizabeth G. Season, Jane Myers, and Gail Windisch, eds., *Art for Every Home: Associated American Artists, 1934-2000* (Kansas: Kansas State University, 2015) 98.

AAA continued to champion their work even after the popularity of the style waned during the 1940s.[179] While Lewenthal set forward a defined vision for the subject matter and style of AAA prints to attract a large audience, members of the Regionalist Triumvirate were able to incorporate their prints for AAA into their larger artistic practices. For example, Benton produced a lithograph titled *Plowing it Under* for AAA the same year as his painting by the same name (Figures 1 and 2). In both works, Benton uses an expressive approach to line and landscape to depict the Black farmer's labor. Highlighting the arched forms of both the mule's body and the man's back, Benton called viewers' attention to the determination of both man and animal as they complete their labor.

While both images used similar subject matter and composition, the lithograph is the mirror image of the painting, suggesting that Benton did not reverse his composition when drawing on the lithographic stone. This lack of reversal suggests that the print allowed Benton to work out his ideas for the painting through the act of drawing on the lithographic stone, or possibly the AAA print was conceived as a means of ensuring a wider audience for a subject Benton deemed particularly important.[180] No matter the impetus for this lack of reversal, this absence of printerly translation in the act of drawing the lithograph suggests that Benton did not feel that either he or his audience would be particularly interested in the technical intricacies of this aspect of the printmaking process. This approach stands in

[179] Ibid 102.

[180] Art historian Henry Adams has suggested that *Plowing it Under* and its prominent position at the artist's 1939 retrospective at the AAA gallery greatly contributed to the artist's commercial success and position of prominence in the regional art movement. Henry Adams, "Ploughing It Under," Accessed February 10, 2022, https://thomashartbenton.org/ploughing-it-under/.

opposition to the connoisseurial practice the Prairie Print Makers sought to promote that I will address in later sections of this chapter.[181]

Prior to the Prairie Print Makers' beginning, two of the club's founders, C.A. Seward, and Carl Smaley, built on the national rhetoric surrounding the affordability and accessibility of printmaking to encourage local, Kansas-based audiences to engage with the medium. Exploring their work in this section demonstrates that although regional print clubs were not a new marketing technique for prints, the club's location and mission can be seen in direct response to national calls to expand American audiences for fine art through printmaking.

Seward founded a short-lived art shop in Wichita, Kansas devoted to prints and select paintings, touting the accessibility of printmaking as part of his own new business venture. "The pictures will be of medium size and medium price. 'The real value of a print lies in the fact that it is within reach of all,' said Mr. Seward."[182] In 1929, Seward also wrote

[181] While AAA sold individual prints for five dollars, the Prairie Print Makers offered membership in their organization which included one print a year for the same price. The secretary of the Prairie Print Makers noted in correspondence with the Chicago Society of Etcher's secretary that this similarity had not significantly impacted their membership. "Do you find that the activities of the Associated Artists have cut in on your memberships to any extent? We have lost a few but have gained new ones faster thann [sic] the resignations and we can trace only a few directly to the five dollar print idea." The only direct reference to the AAA in the available archival correspondence between the two prominent club secretaries, this quote suggests that the regional print club's efforts were not hindered by the practices of other private arts organizations such as AAA.C.A. Seward to James Swann, October 12, 1937, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:22, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

[182] "Art Shop Is Wichita's Latest Contribution Toward Furthering Things Purely Artistic," *Wichita Eagle*, n.d., C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:7, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives. While Seward states that art is becoming within "reach of all," we must be careful to emphasize that he is speaking about a white middle class audience. While this is an expansion from earlier collecting practices, it is still a good that is within reach for all Americans. For a further exploration of the period concept of "Art for the Millions" or "Art for all" which were popular ways of conceiving printmaking impact during the 1930s see Helen

a series of articles in *The Western Art Magazine* promoting the collecting and care of prints for American audiences. In his introductory article, Seward stressed the affordability of printmaking as compared to other fine art media such as paintings and sculpture, a widely recognized reason for the collection of prints. However, Seward went on to place prints in conversation with other decorative arts, suggesting that prints were more easily cared for then these prized collector's items. "[Prints] have another distinct advantage in that they are easily stored, not easily destroyed or lost, and require very little care; whereas glass, pewter, china, silver, furniture, etc. require constant care and attention, are easily damaged and, being bulky, take up so much space as to be prohibitive to many."[183] Aimed towards a particular class of audience already engaged in the collection of decorative arts, Seward encouraged upwardly-mobile, middle class Americans to consider printmaking as a crucial aspect of the middle class home particularly as it occupied an interstitial space between the fine and decorative arts.

Seward's articles guided collectors not only on the practice of collecting prints but also on how to use his or her new collections. "The collector of prints has the satisfaction of knowing he is pursuing a hobby that is not only inexpensive but that may prove to be a sound investment if he selects wisely. The usual motive of the collector is, however, the love of things beautiful, the cultural value, and the pleasure afforded him and his friends by

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Langa, "'Art for the Millions': Printmaking in New York in the 1930s, *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[183] C.A. Seward, "Print Collecting," *The Western Art Magazine*, 1929. Other articles from this series included: C.A. Seward, "Starting a Collection of Prints," *The Western Art Magazine*, 1929; C.A. Seward, "The Care of Prints," *The Western Art Magazine*, 1929.

looking through and handling a collection."[184] Combining the language of investing with that of aesthetics, Seward celebrated prints for their ability to act as markers of distinction. It is also important to note the looking practices that Seward put forward in this quote. Suggesting that a group of friends would be gathered in an individual collector's home, Seward further tied print collecting to the domestic space as prints are being handled in the context of the home rather then hung on gallery walls. This practice of holding, sharing, and looking at prints is another way in which print collecting acted as markers of distinction and a means of creating community as collectors could use prints to express similar tastes in artists, styles, or subjects, further defining their shared collecting class.

Birger Sandzén celebrated Seward's role in expanding audiences for fine art through printmaking in Kansas.

> An important contributing factor in the rise and appreciation of regional art has been the popularity of prints. If the only picture available for homes were oils and watercolors the sheer cost of these would necessarily sharply limit the possession of good pictures to the well-to-do. However, practically everybody can afford a good print. Seward, who finds his greatest expression in prints, saw that the print was a valuable vehicle to bring Kansas art into the home. In his quiet way he was the mainspring in the organization of the Prairie Print Makers Society, whose members are producing some of the finest work in this field.[185]

Referencing Seward's work what he would go on to complete with the Prairie Print Makers, Sandzén celebrated Seward's critical role in expanding the accessibility of fine art to Kansas' middleclass. Noting that printmaking was a "valuable vehicle to bring Kansas art into the home," the Prairie Print Makers can be seen as emphasizing the middleclass American home as a space newly coded for the consumption of fine art.

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[184] Seward, "Print Collecting."

[185] Sandzén, (1937) 4.

Smally was another key figure who promoted printmaking to Kansas consumers prior to his involvement with the Prairie Print Makers. Building upon Kansas historian Cynthia Mines's discussion of Smalley, I want to call attention to aspects of the gallerist's practice to establish how printmaking was positioned within the regional landscape prior to the print club's founding.[186] Shortly after Smally purchased his first fine art print in 1905, he convinced his father to devote a section of his seed-and feed store to the sale of art ranging from prints to Tiffany glass.[187] While an unusual combination of wares, Smalley "maintained that the seed business was not so far removed from the artistic as it might seem," according to Margret Sandzén's article on the dealer from 1939.[188] This new direction for the store proved to be highly successful as visitors traveled from across Kansas as well as neighboring states to visit Smalley's store, uncovering prints that just arrived from both contemporary American printmakers and prominent European artists such as Daumier, Meryon, and occasionally Rembrandt. Transforming McPherson into a center for print collecting, Margret Sandzén's article went on to claim that one French dealer inquired as to the size of the town, "remarking that it must be a very important place since the dealer there always sold more of the modern prints than the New York dealers."[189]

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[186] Cynthia Mines, *For the Sake of Art: The Story of an Art Movement in Kansas* (McPherson, Kansas: The McPherson Foundation, 1979). See also, Bill North, "Prairie Impressions: The Prairie Print Makers and Print Culture in Kansas," Jennifer Cahn, ed., *The Prairie Print Makers* (Kansas City, MI: Exhibits USA, Mid America Arts Alliance, 2001) 20-21.

[187] Ibid, 26.

[188] Margaret Sandzén, "John the Baptist of Art: A Short Biographical Sketch of Carl J. Smalley," *Kansas Magazine*, 1939, 8.

[189] Ibid 7-9.

Affectionately known as "John the Baptist of Art," Smalley played a critical role in developing a market for prints not only through his commercial endeavors but also through the promotion of educational initiatives.[190] Smalley focused his efforts on local schools and women's clubs, a model that the Prairie Print Makers followed in the development of their exhibition practices.[191] One newspaper article celebrated these contributions to the artistic education of everyday people living in Kansas:

> Mr. Smalley has been the man behind the gun in making Kansas folks see art. Through his extensive art collections, he has taught art appreciation to thousands of citizens who otherwise might have missed that pleasure in life. Hundreds of club women have learned "values," and "distance," through Smalley [sic] collection of pictures which have been sent to federation of women's club conventions.[192]

Playing a critical role in establishing regional audiences for fine prints, Smalley's community-based efforts positioned prints as critical tools for expressing status and taste among midwestern audiences.

The Prairie Print Makers Enter a National Network of Regional Print Clubs

Contrary to much of the existing scholarly literature on regional print clubs that presents these organizations as regionally isolated silos of artistic production, the Prairie Print Makers inserted themselves into a national network of print clubs from their founding.[193] According to the artist and club member Leo Courtney Head, "the Prairie Print

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[190] Ibid.

[191] In one such instance Smalley facilitated the donation of two French etchings by the French consulate of New York to the local high school. "High School Recognized for Its Art Activities," *McPherson Weekly Republican*, February 22, 1922.

[192] "Kansas Will Miss Its Art Patron," *McPherson Weekly Republican*, October 3, 1919.

[193] The interconnected quality of regional print clubs has not been adequately reflected within the existing scholarly literature which typically addresses the work of each print club individually. See

Makers is modeled after other national organizations, there being three other principal groups in this field…The Prairie Print Makers is modeled closely after the California Group [PMSC]."[194] The Prairie Print Makers used the PMSC as their model as they accepted work by printmakers in all media, rather than just etching. Conceived of as a national organization from its founding, the Prairie Print Makers not only looked to well-established regional print clubs as examples for their organization, but also sought to make their club complementary to these national organizations' efforts. "The new society is in no way a competitive organization. It was formed to fill the need for a centrally located print society and has the approval and the cooperation of the other national organizations upon which it has been modeled."[195] Thus, Prairie Print Makers were well aware of the increasing national demand for print club membership during this period.

Addressing a growing American audience interested in prints, the Prairie Print Makers encouraged prospective members to consider joining multiple regional print clubs.

> Most of the organizers of the Prairie Print Makers are already members of one or more of the older societies and will continue their memberships. The new group has definite work in the development of our national appreciation of fine prints. The older societies have about reached their limit on membership and have long waiting lists. This seems to indicate a need for a centrally located organization. In fact, the secretaries of all three of the older societies have not only approved of the idea of the Prairie Print Makers but have furnished much helpful information which has been gratefully accepted by the organizers of the new society.[196]

Peters, "Print Clubs in America"; Barbara J. Thompson O'Neill and George C. Foreman, *The Prairie Print Makes* (Topeka, KS: The Kansas Arts Commission, 1981).

[194] Leo Courtney Head, "Print Makers Join in Club Containing Finest of Artists," *Wichita Eagle*, n.d., C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:9.

[195] "The Prairie Print Makers," *The American Magazine of Art* 22, no. 5 (May 1931): 409.

[196] Courtney Head, "Print Makers Join in Club Containing Finest of Artists." Wichita State University Libraries and Special Collections.

Thus, regional print clubs welcomed an increasing number of organizations to join their network at the height of their popularity as this proliferation of print clubs not only alleviated membership constraints, but also provided a centrally located organization that could accept traveling exhibitions organized by existing clubs as they made their way from one end of the United States to the other.

Archival correspondence has revealed that Bertha E. Jaques of the Chicago Society of Etchers, Ruel P. Tolman of the Smithsonian National Museum, and the Brown brothers of the PMSC were all aware and encouraging of the Prairie Print Makers' efforts in Kansas even prior to the founding of their organization. In one such letter from July 1928, Jaques wrote to Tolman from her visit to the Brown brothers' studio in Pasadena suggesting that three artists who would go on to found the Prairie Print Makers would all be excellent candidates for solo exhibitions at the Smithsonian's rotating print gallery.[197] Following Arthur Hall's membership to the Chicago Society of Etchers in 1929, Jaques again appealed to Tolman to feature both Arthur and Norma Basset-Hall in an exhibition. "[Arthur Hall] does fine pure line, the sort of thing that etchers should… I sold more than forty prints for him. A fine man. His wife does the most delectable block prints and together, or alone they could make a good exhibition."[198] Following this encouragement from Jaques, Tolman

[197] These artists included Sandzén, Arthur Hall, and Norma Basset-Hall. Bertha Jaques to Ruel P. Tolman, July 1, 1928, DGA Special Exhibition Files 1925-1926, DGA Special Exhibition Files 1925-1926, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

[198] Bertha Jaques to Ruel P. Tolman, March 28, 1929. Arthur W. Hall Papers MS2017 Box 1 Folder 8. Wichita State University Libraries Special Collections and University Archives.

invited the Halls to participate together in successful two-person exhibition at the Division of the Graphic Arts at the Smithsonian.[199]

While some artists such as Sandzén were not selected for solo exhibitions after Jaques correspondence with Tolman; others such as C.A. Seward were chosen because they represented a distinctly American approach to printmaking. In June 1930, Jaques wrote to Tolman: "In lithographs I see you have not had C.A. Seward of Wichita…He does some sincere work, mostly of subjects in the southwest and he has the merit of being a real American. There is also Birger Sandzén a Swede. Friend of Zorn's who like Zorn, has evolved a distinct style of his own."[200] Highlighting Seward's status as a "real American" for the context of the Smithsonian's National Gallery, Jaques's letter points to the engagement these regional printmakers had with the development of a national approach to printmaking, collecting, and exhibitions discussed in Chapter 1.

Jaques's promotion of fellow regional printmakers also led to the eventual acquisition of members of the Prairie Print Makers' prints by national collections. Following an exhibition of Seward's work at the Smithsonian's Graphic Arts Division in 1931, the artist expressed gratitude that Tolman was able to interest the Library of Congress in acquiring two of his prints, encouraging him to take a print from the exhibition for the curator's own personal collection.[201] While Tolman could not accept gifts personally he

[199] Hall wrote to Tolman thanking him for the checks following the sale of her prints in their exhibition. "We are glad if people have liked them, we feel that it was a privilege to have this opportunity to show them at the Smithsonian." Norma Bassett Hall to Ruel P. Tolman, April 8, 1930, DGA Special Exhibition Files 1925-1926, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

[200] Bertha Jaques to Ruel P. Tolman, June 19, 1930, DGA Special Exhibition Files 1925-1926, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

[201] C.A. Seward to Ruel P. Tolman, January 1, 1932, DGA Special Exhibition Files 1925-1926, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

donated the work to the Smithsonian's Graphic Arts collection, ensuring the Kansas-based artist and the Kansas landscape become a part of the national collection of prints.

Even after the founding of the Prairie Print Makers, Jaques continued to correspond with leading members of the organization and advocate for their work on a national scale. This network of support for regional print clubs allowed for members of the Prairie Print Makers to gain national recognition for both their art and their organization within a year of their club's founding. In one such letter Bertha Jaques wrote, "Jimmie [James Swann] thinks your group is the most interesting, and the most friendly of any he has met—and he just sings about you—not a solo for I sang a duet with him."[202] This support from one of the leaders of the Chicago Society of Etchers, further points to both the national network of regional printmakers and the lack of competition which occurred between each regionally distinct organization.

Correspondence between the Brown Brothers of the PMSC and Seward reveals the individual support and artistic exchanges that occurred between the members of the regionally distinct print clubs. For example, the Brown brothers engaged with Kansas printmakers prior to the founding of the Prairie Print Makers by serving as guest judges for local art competitions. In one such competition, Benjamin Brown awarded two Kansas high schools artworks by himself and Sandzén based on student essays.[203] The prize winning essays responded to Brown's drypoint, *In the Depths- Grand Canyon*, which used heavy crosshatching and a strong contrast light and dark to place the viewer into the depths of the

[202] Bertha Jaques to C.A. Seward, January 7, 1937, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:16. Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

[203] Benjamin Brown to C.A. Seward, April 13, 1925, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:14, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

Grand Canyon (Figure 3).[204] Having Kansas school groups engage with prints depicting important locations in the American landscape demonstrates both the educational mission and the interest in defining an American art for the general public that were central concerns shared across numerous regional print clubs.

In addition to participating in shared exhibitions and the promotion of interest in regional printmaking practices, correspondence between the PMSC and future members of the Prairie Print Makers also reveals the exchange of individual prints which occurred between artists working in different regions. As Howell C. Brown remarked in a letter to Seward: "First of all let me thank you for your print sent for my portfolio. I like it and am glad to have it not only for the good work but for the thought which prompted your sending it as well. The members certainly showed most [royally?] that they appreciated the work I did."[205] Seemingly in gratitude for Brown's support of Seward's printmaking along with other members of the PMSC, Seward sent his fellow artist a print. This exchange of ideas through letters and art objects that was able to occur not only because of the highly portable nature of prints but also due to the increased access and expansion of the national Parcel Post Service in 1913 which allowed for objects such as these to be sent at reasonable rates across the United States.[206]

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[204] It appears that Brown's prints were on exhibition in Kansas and school groups wrote essays responding to the different works which Brown judged. In exchange for the winning essays, Brown awarded prints to the local school groups and one painting to the Wichita High School which he painted created specifically for their school. "Please have the High School at Wichita indicate to me the general subject desired and I will begin the painting and finish as soon as possible, so that it can be presented before the close of school for the summer." A record of this exact painting has yet to be located. Ibid.

[205] Howell C. Brown to C.A. Seward, May 4, 1930, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:16, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

[206] The popularity of Rural Free Delivery that began in 1896, helped bring about the development of the Parcel Post Service in 1913, connecting rural Americans to cities and towns across the United

Founding and Growth of the Prairie Print Makers

Building on this national network of support from prominent figures involved in the regional print club movement, the Prairie Print Makers set their mission to promote the medium among American artists and audiences. "The purpose of the society is to further the interest of both artist and layman in print making and collecting."[207] Following the PMSC's model, the Prairie Print Makers welcomed artists working in a variety of printmaking techniques. Unlike the PMSC, the Prairie Print Makers' founding members used a wide range of preferred printmaking practices including lithography, block printing, intaglio techniques, and occasionally screenprinting.[208]

The Prairie Print Makers divided their membership between three groups: active, associate, and honorary. Active members consisted of artists currently working in prints. Selected by invitation only, active members' annual dues consisted of one dollar, one of the lowest prices of any regional print club during this period.[209] The Prairie Print Makers not only invited established printmakers but also encouraged the work of artists just starting out in the field to join their club. "The active membership is being carefully selected from recognized print makers... We plan to recruit new talent as rapidly as new and talented

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States. For a further exploration of the influence of changing postal regulations see James H. Bruns and Donald J. Bruns, *Reaching Rural America: The Evolution of Rural Free Delivery* (Washington, D.C.: National Postal Museum, Smithsonian Institution, 1998).

[207] "The Prairie Print Makers."

[208] Ibid. A few examples of include Birger Sandzén often worked in lithography, while Charles M. Capps was best known for his aquatints. Norma Bassett Hall often worked in block prints but occasionally experimented with silkscreens.

[209] William Dickerson was the first artist invited to join the Prairie Print Makers. Seward's letter to Dickerson provides an excellent overview of the organization's structure and goals. C.A. Seward to William Dickerson, January 26, 1931, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:20, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

young print makers can be found. It is our purpose to help the experienced print maker but also to help these younger folks get their work before the public."[210] The Prairie Print Makers achieved this recognition for their up-and-coming active members through regular exhibitions, commissioned gift prints, and shared resources devoted to a technical instruction on printmaking.

Letters to invited members particularly stressed the club's vibrant membership. "Active members are carefully selected not only for merit as to standing and quality of work but also for activity. We are especially proud of our record for new fresh, snappy exhibitions which have been made possible by our policy of selecting artists who are actively producing new prints each season."[211] Highlighting the recency of works found in the club's exhibitions, the Prairie Print Makers positioned Kansas status as a thriving artistic center for contemporary American printmakers. This selective approach to building the club's artist membership demonstrates that Prairie Print Makers were interested in amassing a technically proficient and engaged group for their artist membership. [212]

The remaining membership categories consisted of honorary and associate. Selected by the Prairie Print Makers' board of governors, honorary members received all the privileges of associate members but did not have to pay annual dues. The honorary status was conferred on these individuals in recognition for "signal service in the print field or for

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[210] Sandzén, "C.A. Seward-Promoter of Kansas Art."

[211] C.A. Seward to James Swann, July 1, 1936, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:22, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

[212] C.A. Seward's letter to the artist William Dickerson suggested that the organization held the highest standards for artists they might consider inviting into their organization, all of whom would be already known to existing members. "No aggressive membership campaign will be conducted. The selection for membership will be carefully considered and elections made on the basis of activity and genuine interest manifested." C.A. Seward to William Dickerson, January 26, 1931.

the cause of print making and collecting."[213] While this membership category was infrequently bestowed, the club made the dealer Carl Smalley whose work was explored in previous sections of this chapter the first honorary member.[214] Recognizing Smalley's contributions to developing Kansas audiences for fine art printmaking through this honor, the Prairie Print Makers sought to build upon Smalley's critical work in the region through their own printmaking practices.

Dues for associate members consisted of five dollars annually, in exchange for which members received the club's semi-regular bulletins and annual gift print. The Prairie Print Makers touted the value of the associate member prints in their publication materials. "The Annual Gift Print, done by an Active Print Maker and worth several times the amount of the annual dues. The print cannot be obtained in any other way."[215] Smalley had long used this rhetoric in the sale of prints for his own gallery, stating in a newspaper article from 1920, "An old print or etching is a better financial investment than a gilt-edged bond, apart from the aesthetic pleasure it affords."[216] While this type of investment rhetoric has long been used in promoting the sale of prints as original works of art, it is critical to note the different economic contexts in which they were presented. While the 1920s was a strong economic period with a thriving art market; the 1930s, during which the Prairie Print Makers celebrated value of the associate membership, was a period of extreme economic hardship

[213] Ibid.

[214] Head, "Print Makers Join in Club Containing Finest of Artists."

[215] C.A. Seward to William Dickerson, January 26, 1931.

[216] "Smalley Addresses Kansas City Artists," *The McPherson Daily Republican*, December 11, 1920.

for most Americans. It is in this context that we must understand the growth and success of the Prairie Print Makers as an arts organization.

Using this rhetoric of value, the Prairie Print Makers framed their associate membership as a group collecting practice.

> The collecting of fine prints opens up a fascinating field of interest and appreciation, what is widened and enriched by each new acquisition. It can be an expensive hobby it you "go it alone." But, with cooperation, it can be made entirely practical. Our Society, by purchase of an entire edition, is able to bring you each year, for only five dollars annual dues, a print that would normally be priced at several times that amount.[217]

Here, the club's search for economic value for collectors is precisely what creates community among members, allowing a shared expression of taste to be achieved during a period of financial hardship. While interest in cost sharing collectives achieved numerous expressions during the 1930s, the use of this framework to purchase luxury goods demonstrates the critical role these objects played in expressing a shared sense of community.[218]

This community of collectors was not bound to the Midwest, as might be suggested in the title of the print club. Instead, the Prairie Print Makers' associate membership rose to over one hundred and fifty members in their first five years, with participants located throughout the United States. The 1935-1936 annual report celebrated this growing associate membership. "We are happy to again report an increase in both Active and Associate Members during this season just closed. The associate membership has shown a marked

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[217] Arthur W. Hall, "The Prairie Print Makers," ND (c.1935-1945), MDBF (Prairie print makers, Wichita, Kan. Annual report) SASB Print Collection, New York Public Library.

[218] For a further investigation of collective institutions and collective practices that developed in response to the Great Depression see Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America 1929-1941* (New York: Times Books, 1984).

increase in the extreme Eastern and Western section with less increase in the Middle West."[219] Going on to list the states in order of their associate membership representation, the Prairie Print Makers claimed associate members in states as close as Kansas and Oklahoma, and as far flung as New York and the then territory of Hawaii.[220] In the 1937-1938 season, the club again saw an increase in associate members, this time with members from twenty-one states and even Canada.[221]

Interest in the associate membership remained high throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The annual report from 1940-1941 acknowledged that it was a result of the strong associate membership that the club was able to organize a growing number of exhibitions and publish its annual gift prints.

> The officers and council members wish to express their deep appreciation, for the society, to the Associate Members whose hearty support during the year past has enabled us to continue and even increase our activities in these troubled times. The invitations which we issued to fill the vacancies in our associate roster were met with such a gratifying response that the list is almost full again, and the few remaining vacancies will be filled probably this fall.[222]

Noting that the associate membership was at or near capacity, Seward revealed that the tumultuous political and economic climate did not hinder their membership numbers.

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[219] C.A. Seward, "Annual Report for the Season of 1935-1936," June 15, 1936, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:20, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

[220] Ibid. The states in order of the highest membership numbers included: Kansas, New York, Oklahoma, California, Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota, Ohio, Texas, Wisconsin, Mississippi, Kentucky, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Louisiana, Iowa, Utah, Washington, Delaware, and Hawaii.

[221] C.A. Seward, "Annual Report for the Season of 1937-1938," 1938, The New York Public Library Print Collection.

[222] C.A. Seward, "Annual Report for the Season 1940-1941" (The Prairie Print Makers, n.d.), The New York Public Library Print Collection: Astor Lenox and Tilden Foundation.

Instead, Seward implied that it was through the encouragement of existing members, that new associate members joined the club. This community led membership drive reveals that print clubs not only allowed individual members to express distinction but also created a shared class consciousness among its members.

However, the war effort brought increased expressions of concern for the proper role for associate member dues. One of the club's secretary-treasurers, Charles M. Capps expressed concern with the Prairie Print Maker's collection of dues during the war in the annual report from 1941-1942. "Is a print society something that should be suspended for the duration of the war, in order to leave more dollars in its associate members' pockets for their purchase of War Bonds?" [223] However, Capps concluded his reflection the print club's operations in light of the war with strong and clear support of the Prairie Print Maker's efforts.

> Since our society's activities involve less than a few thousand dollars yearly, it is hardly enough for Uncle Sam to worry about. The dues received from Associate Members go to artists who themselves need the wherewithal to buy War Bonds. They also help in a very small way to keep business alive for printers, papermakers, etc. They also assemble and circulate exhibitions which result in sales for other artists—and in advancing the development of our own American culture, which is one of the things for which America fights. Therefore, we feel, suspension of our activities would accomplish nothing as important as our continuance accomplishes.[224]

Here, the Prairie Print Makers pushed against the notion of art as a luxury good. Instead, the organization suggested that the production of prints through the print club is provides

[223] Charles M Capps, "Annual Report to the Associate Members for the Season of 1941-1942," n.d., The New York Public Library Print Collection: Astor Lenox and Tilden Foundation.

[224] Ibid.

additional avenues to support the war effort; by both financing artists' purchases war bonds and preserving American culture.

Lauren Kroiz's analysis of regional art and citizenship provides a critical framework to view this civic engagement of the Prairie Print Makers.[225] Kroiz's text detailed how regionalists used education as a means of defining art making and appreciation as work essential to nation building. "Regionalists and their advocates believed that individuals who learned to make art also learned the tools to become modern citizens, a role defined by active participation in the democratic sphere rather than simply a conferred legal status."[226] The Prairie Print Makers' wartime goals demonstrate that the club saw their members as not only actively engaging in the production and informed consumption of art but also supporting the war effort through an engaged citizenship.

The subsequent celebration of the Prairie Print Makers' decision to stay open during the war in the club's Annual Reports for the next three years demonstrates that the organization saw their work as an important way to build a thriving American culture. One of the club's secretaries, William J. Dickerson reflected this sentiment in *The Annual Report to Associative Members for the Season of 1942-1943*:

> A year ago the members of our council were concerned about this society in wartime, and even debated suspension until more important matters should be settled. Feeling, however, that our activities have importance in the measure that they contribute to morale at home and to the continuous cultural development which is one of the things we cherish in America, we decided to

[225] For example, Kroiz discusses Benton's pedagogical practice as such: "Benton—to make art acceptable as productive work in the United States—attempted in his pedagogy to evade both the avant-gardism of Marxist artists associated with the John Reed Club and the vision linked with art museums of art appreciation as the domain of wealth and feminine leisure." Lauren Kroiz, *Cultivating Citizens: The Regional Work of Art in the New Deal Era* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018) 117.

[226] Ibid 6.

> go right on. The response has more than justif justified [sic] our decision. Schools, libraries and community movements everywhere have been more grateful than ever the use of our exhibitions. And our family, our Associate Membership, has supported the society's program loyally.[227]

For Dickerson, the Prairie Print Makers' continued work was an example of the American spirit, one that prizes, what he terms "cultural development" above other nationalist endeavors. The emphasis placed on the educational role the Prairie Print Makers played in the lives of their communities can also be seen in the selected venues Dickerson highlighted as hosting the club's exhibitions including schools and libraries, notably not galleries or museum settings. This interest in building regional communities of American consumers is emphasized by his use of the term "family" to describe club members. Bringing together civic engagement, education, and the family, Dickerson positions print club membership as an essential aspect of an informed, middle-class American household.

The next club secretary, Arthur Hall, also emphasized the important cultural role the Prairie Print Makers played for both artists and lay people during the devastating final year of WWII.

> The decision of the council to carry on our activities in spite of the war and the turmoil throughout the world, has been justified. While many of our artist members have not produced in the creative field as they do in normal times, still, we were able to assemble a splendid group of prints which was circulated throughout the country... [The] Prairie Print Makers are glad to have been able to carry on this cultural activity on behalf of the public, the artists, and the cause of printmaking.[228]

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[227] William Dickerson, "Annual Report to Associate Members for the Season of 1942-43" (The Prairie Print Makers, n.d.), The New York Public Library Print Collection: Astor Lenox and Tilden Foundation.

[228] Arthur W. Hall, "Annual Report to Associate Members: Season of 1944-1945," October 13, 1945, The New York Public Library Print Collection: Astor Lenox and Tilden Foundation.

Hall's rallying cry for support from associate members demonstrates that the Prairie Print Makers saw their traveling exhibitions as both sustaining and uplifting American culture, a critical aspect of the war effort. Rather than seen as frivolous endeavors during the Great Depression and WWII, the Prairie Print Makers found that both their associate membership and their traveling exhibitions were in demand as they presented an affordable means of expressing class distinction and good taste for American consumers when other methods were out of reach.

These traveling exhibitions were a critical aspect of the Prairie Print Makers' mission from its founding until its closure during the 1960s. As part of the educational mission under which the Prairie Print Makers operated, the Kansas-based club circulated numerous exhibitions of prints by active members to local schools, universities, and civic organizations. To organize these traveling exhibitions, the Prairie Print Makers requested active members send four prints from one edition to the club annually. Three of these prints would be kept in circulation for three identical traveling shows and one would be held locally to be shown at the Kansas State Federation of Art and other Kansas-based venues.[229] Each of exhibitions circulated to around ten venues through the course of the year. Of the three exhibitions that were sent to locations outside of Kansas, exhibition venues primarily included schools in states as far as New York and Pennsylvania, with many more exhibitions

[229] C.A. Seward, "Dear Prairie Print Maker," 1936, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:20, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives. This practice changed slightly in the 1936 season after which the fourth exhibition also circulated due to increased demand. "Last season we had an unusual demand for our three exhibitions. We were not able to book all of the requests we received. Thinking we could avoid a similar experience this season, we placed a fourth one in use. Even the added-one did not entirely resolve the increased demand." C.A. Seward, "Exhibition Report 1935-1936," 1936, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:20, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

sent to similar locations in nearby states of Oklahoma, Texas and Missouri.[230] In addition to the four large circulating exhibitions organized by the Prairie Print Makers, the club also sent out smaller displays of prints and received exhibitions organized by other art groups nationally.[231]

One exhibition announcement noted that these shows encouraged a technical understanding of printmaking by a large audience. "One of the purposes of the organization is to provide means whereby our members and the public at large may become better acquainted with the work of our contemporary print makers through the circulating exhibitions of prints by artist members, at a minimum expense, to clubs, schools, art organizations and individuals."[232] Sending their exhibitions to organizations frequently associated with education, the Prairie Print Makers followed other regional print clubs of the period by framing their commercial exhibitions as part of a larger, public educational program. Seward emphasized the educational nature of these exhibitions in a 1936 announcement to artist members.

> Many of our exhibitions are held in high schools, colleges, and study clubs and often students are required to write themes [sic] on the exhibitions. We are sure you realize that this not only offers an opportunity for publicity of the highest type, but also is planting the seed of print appreciation and

[230] C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:20, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives contains exhibition reports for Seward's time as club secretary.

[231] For example, the club received thirty one exhibitions in the 1935 to 1936 season. Seward, "Annual Report for the Season of 1935-1936" (1936).

[232] Arthur W. Hall, "The Prairie Print Makers," c.1935-1945, MDBF (Prairie print makers, Wichita, Kan. Annual report) SASB Print Collection, New York Public Library.

> collecting in the most fertile field. Many of our sales can already be traced to this source.[233]

Thus, by educating the public on printmaking practices these commercial exhibitions taught audiences on how to be good, middle-class consumers by using connoisseur knowledge to acquire a technically proficient collection of prints.

The Prairie Print Makers selected works for their exhibitions that were deemed accessible to middle class Americans both monetarily and technically. According to Hall, prints in the exhibitions were "priced within the reach of a modest income. Each group has plenty of variety of both interest and subject matter, and all of the recognized printmaking methods are represented."[234] The subsequent sections of this chapter will explore specific examples of both the technical and stylistic approaches to printmaking the Prairie Print Makers championed in both their exhibitions and commissions.

The Prairie Print Makers' Support of New Printmaking Techniques

The Prairie Print Makers celebrated a diverse range of printmaking technologies through exhibitions, instructional publications, and correspondence. Of note is the Prairie Print Maker's support of lithography and silkscreen as techniques for fine art printmaking during the 1930s and 1940s prior to the proliferation of these processes in the fine-art printmaking workshop boom of the 1960s. While federally sponsored art programs encouraged artists to engage with lithography and silkscreen, two techniques widely

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[233] C.A. Seward, "Special to Artist Members," May 1, 1936, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:20, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

[234] The Prairie Print Maker's exhibitions ranged from 75 to 90 prints. Each work was matted by the artist but left unframed for easy transport and more affordable pricing. Hall, "The Prairie Print Makers."

considered less prestigious than etching due to their association with commercial printmaking practices; the ways in which private arts organizations supported artists' and audiences' engagement with these media has not been widely documented.[235] Focusing on members of the Prairie Print Makers use of these media in both commercial and fine art settings, this section explores the print club as an important force in supporting and promoting technical innovation across commercial and fine art printmaking practices.

As the founding secretary-treasurer of the Prairie Print Makers, C.A. Seward played a critical role in bridging the realms of fine and commercial artistic production through the space of the print club. From 1923 until his death, Seward served as the Director of the Advertising and Art Department for the Western Lithograph Company based in Wichita, Kansas. Founded in 1904, the Western Lithograph Company was known for their print advertisements; however, the company also produced product packaging and paper goods for commercial business and even printed fine-art lithographs for some local artists including Birger Sandzén.[236] Under Seward's artistic direction, the Western Lithograph Company attracted graphic artists to Wichita and supported existing artists in the region during the Great Depression.[237] The Western Lithograph Company employed several

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[235] For an example of the federally-sponsored publications on these media see: "The Silk-Screen Process" (W.P.A. Technical Series: Public Activities Circular, July 22, 1941); Two artists working with the WPA's FAP, Anthony Velonis and Max Arthur Cohn, founded the National Serigraph society in 1940. Zigrosser was a key proponent of silkscreen printing as a form of fine art in his position as the Philadelphia Museum of Art's Print Curator and his association with the regional office of the FAP. See Carl Zigrosser, "The Serigraph: A New Medium," *Print Collector's Quarterly*, no. xxviii (1941): 442–77; For a comprehensive discussion of lithography in the United States prior to the 1960s see Clinton Adams, *American Lithographers, 1900-1960* (New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).

[236] Katie Meyer, "C.A. Seward: Artist and Draftsman," in *C.A. Seward: Artist and Draftsman* (Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas, 2011) 29.

[237] A review of the newspaper articles on the Western Lithograph Company from the *Wichita Eagle* reveals publishing and aviation as two central industries in Wichita that allowed the Kansas city to

founding members of the Prairie Print Makers under Seward's direction, including Charles Capps, Lloyd Foltz, and Clarence Hotvedt.

Seward built on his position at the Western Lithograph Company to champion the accessibility and artistic potential of lithography. In his 1931 treatise on metal plate lithography, Seward sought to elevate the position of lithography through a greater technical understanding of the artistic process, highlighting the medium's ability to capture the artist's hand. "Lithography is the simplest and most wonderful of all the graphic arts, and probably the most abused. That is not understood clearly by present day artists… If they but knew it, not only as the simplest and most versatile, but also the most autographic, of all the graphic arts, the lithograph would soon be restored to its rightful position in the print world."[238]

Seward's writings suggested that it was not the commercial use of lithography that damaged the technique's artistic reputation. Instead, it was the medium's prosaic use in the hands of inferior artists.

> The process proved so simple and so adaptable to commercial uses, that it enlisted the services of more and more clever craftsmen and of fewer artists. Many of these craftsmen had little or no idea of art, but became very skillful in the use of the crayon. The result was a flood of inferior work…The process had been so cheapened that it lost favor not only with the artist but with collectors, print dealers and the general public as well. The sting of this prejudice almost annihilated one of the greatest mediums of expression ever given to the artist.[239]

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maintain a strong middle class despite the devastating impact of the Great Depression. "Western Lithograph Company," *Wichita Eagle*, September 25, 1921; "Purchases Stick of Hollow Estate in Western Litho," *Wichita Eagle*, January 19, 1947.

[238] C.A. Seward, *Metal Plate Lithography-For Artists And Draftsmen* (New York: Pencil Point Press, 1931).

[239] C.A. Seward, "Enjoy Your Museum: IIG: Lithographs" (Esto Publishing Company, 1936), C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:13, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

For Seward, technical skill could not compensate for an education in the arts as he created a distinction between an educated draftsman and one simply producing lithographs for their commercial potential. Part of the Prairie Print Maker's educational mission, Seward's publications suggest that it was essential to combine both a technical understanding of printmaking and good taste.

One commercial advertisement created by Seward during his tenure at the Western Lithograph Company is an advertisement for the Dye's Chile Mixture (image 4).[240] While the advertisement uses a strong contrast of bold, primary colors to catch the viewer's attention, typical of commercial imagery; it also uses a sketchy quality of the lithographic line to create an engaging, almost cartoonish figure at its center. Highlighting the fluidity of the lithographic line in the gestural suggestion of a background, Seward's advertisement calls attention to the artist's hand required to construct the commercial image.

Seward not only promoted what he termed an "artistic" approach to commercial lithography but also encouraged artists to engage in technically inventive ways with fine art lithography. "Lithography is the most versatile of all the graphic arts. The methods and manners of doing a lithography is limited only by the inventiveness of the artist."[241] This instruction from Seward's treatise on metal plate lithography can almost be seen as foreshadowing the technical innovation that proliferated in the media during the 1960s workshop boom. Following this encouraging plea to artists, Seward concluded his text with images of fine art lithographs produced in a variety of stylistic and technical approaches.

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[240] This identification was made by independent scholar Barbara J. Thompson. Barbara J. Thompson and Saralyn Reece Hardy, *C.A. Seward: Artist and Draftsman* (Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas, 2011) 15.

[241] C.A. Seward, *Metal Plate Lithography-For Artists And Draftsmen*.

These examples range from more expressionistic sketches such as Mildred Rackley's *Study* (figure 5) to completed prints that had already received widespread acclaim such as George Biddle's *Pollo y Polque* (figure 6).

Seward also promoted lithography in his correspondence. In one such instance, the artist Kenneth M. Adams of Taos New Mexico wrote to Seward not only for technical guidance on the lithography process, but also for further details on publishing his fine art print with the Western Lithography Company.[242] This movement between the print club and the commercial printer is further evidence of the permeable boundary that the Prairie Print Makers developed between these two categories.

Other artist members of the Prairie Print Makers also promoted the group's efforts in lithography through correspondence and print exchanges. Of note is Sandzén's exchange of lithographs with Grant Wood. In Wood's reply to Sandzén's offer to share work he writes: "It would be a pleasure to exchange lithographs with you, though I am afraid that I will get the best of the deal. Lithography is a new medium for me and I have a great deal yet to learn about it."[243] This overly humble response by Wood demonstrates both the number of artists working in the media during this period and the ways in which print club members used the movement of art objects to both create community and encourage technical innovation in printmaking techniques.

The Prairie Print Makers also promoted a range of printmaking practices through their exhibitions. The organization accepted submissions of all printmaking methods,

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[242] Kenneth M. Adams to C.A. Seward, August 29, 1929, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:15, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

[243] Grant Wood to Birger Sandzén, March 30, 1939, Birger Sandzén Memorial Art Gallery Archives.

allowing artists to share their explorations of new printmaking technologies alongside their better-known works. One such artist whose submissions reflected this innovation was Norma Bassett Hall. One of the founding members of the Prairie Print Makers, Hall was best known for her color block prints which frequently depicted the American landscape in bold swaths of vibrant colors such as *Old Sycamore* from 1941-1942 (figure 7).[244] For the club's 1947 traveling exhibition, however, she exhibited several screenprints, becoming part of the Prairie Print Maker's efforts to gain recognition for the media as an expressive form of fine art.

One of the works included in the exhibition was Hall's *Home of a Spanish Cobbler* from 1945 (figure 8). In this work, Hall explored her interest in using color to create richly saturated images of the American Southwest. Contrasting the muted tans of the tree and adobe building against the bright blue sky and yellow of the tree, Hall followed visual conventions already established in her block prints such as *Old Sycamore*. However, In *Home of a Spanish Cobbler*, Hall embraced of the flatness that can be achieved through screen-printing, creating graphic forms through bold areas of unlayered areas of color. Although this embrace of new technology is used to create a traditional scene of town life, I suggest that these traveling exhibitions allowed American audiences to gain technical familiarity with the printmaking technique as a form of fine art distinct from its uses in commercial imagery.[245]

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[244] For a further exploration of Hall's work see Joby Patterson, *Norma Bassett Hall: Catalogue Raisonné of the Block Prints and Serigraphs* (Portland, Oregon: Pomegranate Communications, Inc., 2014).

[245] While much of the existing scholarly literature addresses the support for silk screening that developed out of the federally sponsored art programs, I want to call attention to the way in which private arts organizations such as the Prairie Print Makers also aided in this technical appreciation of the media. For an overview of the printmaking technology's history see Guido Lengwiler, *A History*

One exhibition review of the Prairie Print Maker's 1947 show in St. Louis reveals how the Prairie Print Makers exhibitions fostered public knowledge of silkscreens. Celebrating serigraphs as being the "newest color-reproduction process," the exhibition review both provided a technical overview and highlighted the merits of the printmaking process.[246] Noting that serigraphs are generally a more affordable form of printmaking, the review praises the medium's accessibility. "Serigraphy has a wide range of color and textural effects and the further advantage of brining original works of art within reach of the average collector." [247] While the author suggested the potential technical range of the medium, he went on to note the more limited, traditional subject matter that the Prairie Print Makers chose to highlight in their exhibition. "Serigraphs at the library demonstrate the suitability of the medium for garden scenes and landscapes… Virtually every conceivable subject of traditionalists is included in the show. There is apparently no all-out abstraction or symbolism."[248] This traditional approach to subject matter demonstrates that, even though the Prairie Print Makers introduced new printmaking techniques to American audiences, the organization remained firmly entrenched in promoting and reproducing white middle-class ideals of beauty.[249]

The Prairie Print Makers Associate Gift Prints Creating an Imagined Community

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of Screen Printing: How an Art Evolved into an Industry (Cincinnati, Ohio: ST Media Group International, 2013).

[246] Howard Derrickson, "Serigraphs Drawing Attention in Prairie Print Makers' Art Show," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 16, 1947.

[247] Ibid.

[248] Ibid.

[249] For a further discussion of print clubs promoting middle class ideals of the beautiful see chapter three.

Prairie Print Makers commissioned an annual associate gift print to be sent out to associate members in good standing. To receive a gift print, associate members were required to pay their annual dues of five dollars by May 1st of each year.[250] A committee which typically included the club's officers selected the artist member who would receive the Prairie Print Makers' annual commission. The artist was typically paid one hundred and fifty dollars in exchange for an edition size of two hundred prints.[251] This practice was repeated annually from 1931 to 1965 except for the 1963 season in which members were invited to select from remaining prints left over from previous seasons.[252]

The club's inaugural gift print, titled, *A Kansas Creek*, was created by Birger Sandzén and printed by C.A. Seward at Western Lithograph in Wichita (figure 7). The most senior founding member of the Prairie Print Makers, Sandzén had not only achieved national recognition for his printmaking practice but also played a critical role in promoting the graphic arts in Kansas by the time this work was published. While a detailed discussion of the artist's biography is beyond the scope of this chapter, I will explore elements of the artist's career to establish the central role Sandzén played in the history of Kansas graphic arts.[253]

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[250] Charles M Capps, "Annual Report to the Associate Members For the Season of 1941-1942," n.d., The New York Public Library Print Collection: Astor Lenox and Tilden Foundation.

[251] "The Prairie Print Makers Gift Prints 1931-1936," ND c.1936, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:20, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

[252] Thompson O'Neill and Foreman, 58.

[253] For a detailed discussion of Sandzén's graphic works and biography see Charles Pelham III Greenough, *The Graphic Work of Birger Sandzén*, 4th ed. (Lindsborg, Kansas: Birger Sandzén Memorial Foundation, 2001); Emory Lindquist, *Birger Sandzén: An Illustrated Biography* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

Born in Sweden in 1871, Sandzén immigrated to the United States in 1894 to teach at Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas, becoming a key figure in the art department until his retirement in 1946. While Sandzén worked in a rural area of the United States, he remained connected to the national network of printmakers though exhibitions and print club memberships.[254] A feature in *The American Magazine of Art* from 1917 called Sandzén "a modern and an independent."[255] Going on to remark that, "to a great extent, Mr. Sandzén has worked alone, being remote from the so-called art centers and too busy to come east. But he has not gotten out of step with the times."[256] This article is keen to point out that Sandzén was able to remain in dialogue with national artistic movements despite his more isolated geographic location, a practice that could be considered part of the Prairie Print Makers' larger goals.

In addition to gaining recognition for his own work on a national scale, Sandzén was a vocal supporter of regional art communities. In a 1919 letter to the editor of *The American Magazine of Art*, Sandzén encouraged the development of a national art through the support of individual artists.

> Our patriotism in the United States has not reached our national art yet… Our efforts must be infinitely more specialized and much less generalized to bring about the best results. People out here who prospect for oil do not generalize. They dig deep. Often, they miss it, but sometimes they find riches. To find one

[254] In addition to playing a founding role in the Prairie Print Makers Sandzén was a member of numerous print clubs throughout his career including: Chicago Society of Etchers; Society of American Graphic Artists; Society of American Etchers, Gravers, Lithographers and Woodcutters; and the PMSC.

[255] "Birger Sandzén: Painter and Lithographer," *The American Magazine of Art* 8, no. 4 (February 1917): 148.

[256] Ibid, 151.

> great artist means more to a country's art than establishing a score of museums and art schools.[257]

For Sandzén, the growing national institutions, primarily based along the East Coast, did not support the average American artist. Instead, he thought "real artists should be helped and found where they live and are able to work."[258] Sandzén proposed that these individual artists should be supported and collected in their own regions, with their work displayed at local libraries and schools. "Even a very small permanent collection of good pictures in a school or library will establish a permanent interest in art in a community."[259] This interest in supporting artists working in their own regional communities through exhibitions at local educational institutions prefigures the Prairie Print Makers' work. Thus, Sandzén was an ideal figure for the club's inaugural gift print as this selection not only brought national attention to the organization's efforts but also honored Sandzén's vision for the national growth of a regional form of art making and consumption.

A Kansas Creek was typical of the artist's landscape imagery. Here, Sandzén used lithography to create a lively depiction of the Midwestern landscape through his sketchy, almost expressionistic use of line. Creating swirling tendrils of interconnected curls seen in the leaves of the trees, Sandzén highlights lithography's ability to create dense yet dynamic imagery. Likely a depiction of Wild Horse Creek near his parents-in-law's farm, the work firmly roots the viewer in the Kansas landscape, as each of the trees at the center reach down

[257] "Correspondence to Encourage Art," *The American Magazine of Art* 10, no. 4 (February 1919): 138–40.

[258] Ibid.

[259] Ibid.

and seemingly grab ahold on the land below.[260] Choosing a well-known, Kansas-based artist to depict the local landscape for the Prairie Print Maker's first gift print, the club ensured that a sense of place was integral to the organization's membership as it expanded nationally.[261]

As the Prairie Print Makers grew, the club selected both artists working outside of the Midwestern region and printmakers engaging in a wide variety of artistic styles for their annual gift print. Thus, the Prairie Print Makers ensured their membership was attractive to as large an audience as possible by selecting gift prints that both employed a more modern style such as Doel Reed's *Spring* (figure 11) as well as works that used a more traditional printmaking aesthetic closely associated with the etching rival, such as Arthur H. Hall's *Stone Bridge in Winter* (figure 12). By appealing to both modern and traditional tastes, the Prairie Print Makers cultivated a large audience for their prints with members spread throughout the United States.

Despite these stylistic differences, most of the Associate members' gift prints depicted landscape scenes with identifiable imagery. As the art historian Jason Weems has described, regionalist concerns were not confined to the Midwest during the interwar period. Instead, regionalist art was created throughout the United States that reflected a larger,

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[260] Bill North, "Catalogue of the Exhibition," *The Prairie Print Makers*, ed. Jennifer Cahn (Kansas City, MI: Exhibits USA, Mid America Arts Alliance, 2001) 28.

[261] This image continued to loom large in the club's publicity materials. As an announcement for the club's associate membership demonstrates (Figure 10). "The Prairie Print Makers," ND c.1936, C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:20, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives. Containing thumbnail images of the first 6 gift prints, all of whom depict scenes in the American landscape, the Prairie Print Makers provided potential associate members with a visual overview of their artists' shared visual languages.

national interest in defining what it means to be American within a regionally diverse country.

> The anxiety over the eclipse of rural identity in the face of consolidation by mass culture, urbanism, and industrialization inspired much of the "regionalism" that suffused the American countryside during the 1920s and 1930s. From New England to the desert Southwest, regional thinkers, artists, and inhabitants responded to these forces by asserting the unique character of local life as an analeptic to the displacing and unfamiliar forms of cosmopolitanism and mass culture.[262]

While not all of the Prairie Print Makers' gift prints were executed in a strictly regionalist style, their celebration of distinct, recognizable locations from the American landscape demonstrate that these artists were also responding to the similar national concerns that has defined the regional art movement.

This importance of highlighting a sense of place through the Prairie Print Maker's gift prints can be seen in Gene Kloss's 1945 print titled *Southwestern Summer* (figure 13).[263] Born in Oakland, California in 1903, Kloss studied at Berkeley and the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco. In 1925, she honeymooned with her husband the poet Phillip Kloss, in New Mexico where she quickly became captivated by the landscape and culture of the Southwest, sating "I was a New Mexican from then on."[264] Shortly thereafter, the couple

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[262] Jason Weems, *Barnstorming the Prairies,* 162.

[263] Of the thirty-four prints commissioned, approximately twenty percent were by women artists. Thus, in my selection of Associate gift prints to discuss I have chosen to highlight the contributions of two women as I continue to explore how women artists used their association with print clubs to further their own artistic practice. While The Prairie Print Makers claimed several recent immigrants among their membership and featured in their gift prints, no artists of color can be identified as having a sustained association with the club.

[264] Gene Kloss as cited in A. Eugene Sanchez, *Gene Kloss: An American Printmaker, A Raisonné* (Taos, New Mexico: De Teves Publishing, 2009).

settled in Taos, where they became active members in town's thriving artistic community.[265] While not a Kansas-based artist, Kloss not only became close with Charles M. Capps and other founding members of the Prairie Print Makers through their visits to New Mexico but also demonstrated her commitment to regional art in the United States making her an ideal candidate for a commission from the Prairie Print Makers.

In *Southwestern Summer*, Kloss followed the horizontal landscape format commonly employed in the club's gift prints. Using aquatint to create shadowy pathways into the center of the image, Kloss drew the viewer into a Southwestern Pueblo, most likely the Taos Pueblo which was a subject that the artist returned to throughout her career.[266] Layering areas of rich grays with the cream-colored paper, Kloss further moves the viewer's eye through the landscape by inserting intimate, yet anonymous pairs of people into the composition. The distance at which Kloss presents these figures positions them as part of the landscape, simultaneously creating an indigenous "other" that somehow lives in greater connection to the natural world and reflecting the spiritual admiration Kloss proclaimed for members of the Taos Pueblo.[267]

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[265] For a further discussion of Kloss's biography see Kloss Phillips, *Gene Kloss Etchings* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Sunstone Press, 1981).

[266] The Taos Pueblo was built by the indigenous Anasazi between 1000-1450 AD. The church seen in the distance was likely St. Geronimo de Taos, was first constructed around 1619 as part of the Spanish colonization of the American Southwest and was later rebuilt in its present form around 1850. The religion practiced at the Taos Pueblo is a complex combination of Catholicism and indigenous religious traditions which current tribe members describe as such: "The Pueblo Indians are about 90% Catholic. Catholicism is practiced along with the ancient Indian religious rites which are an important part of Taos Pueblo life. The Pueblo religion is very complex; however, there is no conflict with the Catholic church, as evidenced by the prominent presence of both church and kiva in the village." Taos Pueblo, https://taospueblo.org/, accessed March 12, 2022.

[267] See Oral History Interview with Gene Kloss and Sylvia Loomis, June 11, 1964, Smithsonian, Archives of American Art. https://www.aaa.si.edu/download_pdf_transcript/ajax?record_id=edanmdm-AAADCD_oh_213604.

The Prairie Print Makers' publication which accompanied this gift print echoed these sentiments. "[Kloss] has often been called a Landscape Mystic, which does not altogether apply, since her interest is humanity as well as landscape. Her love of nature, however, and of natural people is one of her main qualities."[268] This exoticizing framework was used as an entry point for associate members, many of whom would not have visited the Taos Pueblo, further suggesting that the club's target audience for their associate members were white, middle-class Americans.

The Prairie Print Maker's accompanying publication was keen to point out that her imagery was the result of careful study rather than an imagined landscape. "Mrs. Kloss stands for certain objective principles, with both an esthetic and moral responsibility in her work. This does not mean her work carries a 'message,' except intrinsically. She seeks to portray a valid experience, an honest emotion, infused with an accurate scientific knowledge of her subject. She belongs to no 'school' of art, and rejects all political compulsions."[269] Stressing that her work is removed from the political while presenting this detailed scene in the context of the Prairie Print Makers gift print, Kloss's work can also be seen as celebrating regional distinction within the Southwestern landscape for a national audience. An image which would have been sent out to associate members of the Prairie Print Makers throughout the United States, Kloss's *Southwestern Summer* nods to indigenous culture as part of America's regional diversity. Creating an image of what Weems has described as the "cultural mythologies" that were critical to the formation of regionalism, Kloss's gift print

[268] "'Southwestern Summer' an Aquatint by Gene Kloss" (The Prairie Print Makers, 1945), C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:23, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

[269] Ibid.

expresses a shared regionalist concern with the homogenization of the American landscape through cultural nationalism. [270]

The final example of a work commissioned by the Prairie Print Makers for their associate membership that I will explore in this section is Clare Leighton's wood engraving from 1952 titled, *Corn Pulling* (figure 14). As demonstrated in Chapter 1, Leighton had a strong association with numerous print clubs across the United States and Europe having immigrated to the United States in 1939.[271] For her work with the Prairie Print Makers, Leighton drew on her familiarity with rural life to depict two female workers harvesting corn, a practice many Kansas based members would have been familiar with.[272] While one woman stands, pulling the last ears of corn off of the tallest stalk, the other figure hunches over, placing the corn they have collected in a bag below. Leighton echoed the arching back of the second worker in the repeated, rounded hills in the background using an exaggerated style that draws upon regionalist works such as Grant Wood's *Stone City, Iowa* from 1930 (figure 15). Contrasting the bare, jagged edges of the stalks that have been picked with the rounded hills, Leighton creates a powerful image of the cyclical nature of rural life.

The accompanying text that announced Leighton's gift print to the Prairie Print Makers' associate membership celebrated the artist's intimate knowledge of farming. Including a description of the artist's work from Martin Hardie, former keeper of prints at

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[270] Weems, (2015) xxii.

[271] Leighton was a member of the PMSC, the Prairie Print Makers, the Society of American Graphic Artists, the Royal Society of Painters, Etchers and Engravers; and the Society of Wood Engravers.

[272] While Leighton was best known for her politically engaged fine art prints, she also authored and illustrated several books on farming including *The Farmers Year: A Calendar of English Husbandry* from 1933. Leighton immigrated to the United States from England with the outset of World War II, becoming an American citizen in 1948. For a further discussion of the artist's work see Anne Stevens, *Clare Leighton: Wood Engravings and Drawings* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 1992).

the Victoria and Albert Museum, the text also pointed to the artist's international reputation. "Leighton has never been just a superficial observer of the picturesque scene of situation, has never been dependent on the easy charm of associated sentiment, but is one who knows the underlying conditions and technicalities of her theme."[273] The accompanying text goes on to fluctuate between calling attention to the artist's international acclaim as a fine artist, and establishing her commercial success as a book illustrator.

The Prairie Print Maker's embrace of both aspects of Leighton's career reflected many artist members' careers who moved freely between the realms of fine and commercial art. This accessibility of the gift print not only in subject matter but also in the biography of the artist reflects Kroiz's understanding of one of the larger goals of regionalism, to position art as an essential part of defining American identity. "To combat stereotypes of art as luxury--an indulgence--or a feminine field, Regionalist educational programs in the Midwest claimed the art appreciation and art making of hard-working rural residents…as the fundamental source of American art both on the local and national stage."[274] According to Kroiz, the experience of art and art education, therefore, became an essential tool for establishing community.[275]

Using this framework of the formation of community through art, I would like to return to the Prairie Print Makers' larger practice of sending gift prints to their associate

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[273] Martin Hardie as cited in "'Corn Pulling' A Wood-Engraving by Clare Leighton" (The Prairie Print Makers, 1952), C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:23, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

[274] Kroiz, 6.

[275] Ibid, 12-15. Kroiz is also building upon art historian Victoria Grieve foundational text on art of the New Deal. Victoria Grieve, *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

members. Combining different stylistic approaches to the presentation of the American landscape, the Prairie Print Maker's created a standard presentation of each gift print to code these works as knowable and accessible to associate members as they entered the American home.

The Prairie Print Makers' associate gift prints were sent to each member in a standard size folder that included an essay as well as reproductive images of the artist's works. On the folders' covers, the Prairie Print Makers listed the title, media, artist's name, year the print was produced, title of the organization, and a line on which the associate member's name would be handwritten (figure 16). Each folder notes both the edition size and the fact that the plate has since been canceled. This definition of the limited multiple not only encouraged a growing print connoisseurship but also defined an elite community of members who received one of the annual gift prints.

In addition to identifying the mechanics of the print edition, as well as the biography of the artist, the accompanying text frequently called attention to the specific visual qualities of the print itself. For example, the statement accompanying C.A. Seward's associate gift print from 1936 described *Adobe Village—New Mexico* as (figure 17):

> [The lithograph] is not the 'impression' of a visitor but a sympathetic transcription of the Southwestern scene brought to life by the artistry and mature understanding of one who has known that picturesque region long and well. It is not surprising to find the foreground tree allotting such a fascinating and important part of the composition. Seward is never more in a more happy vein than in tracing the tortuous limbs or massing the foliage of trees.[276]

[276] "'Adobe Village-New Mexico' A Lithograph by C.A. Seward" (The Prairie Print Makers, 1936), C.A. Seward and Prairie Print Makers. MS2013 Box: 1 FF:23, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections, and University Archives.

Calling attention to specific visual details of the landscape print, the Prairie Print Makers encouraged associate members to look at a print in a specific way. Instructing the associate members on looking practices, the Prairie Print Maker created a shared experience of reading both the text and the image for their associate membership. Thus, the presentation of the gift prints was an essential tool for creating community among the Prairie Print Makers geographically dispersed membership.

This definition of community through shared experiences recalls historian Benedict Anderson's study of the essential role print capitalism played in the definition of the nation and nationalism or the "imagined community."[277] While much smaller in scale, the Prairie Print Maker's gift prints created a similar imagined community through the shared experience of receiving, reading, and studying prints. Containing a wide range of members distributed geographically across the country, this unifying experience of reading and viewing the print that enters into the home both defined the American landscape as a collection of regionally distinct spaces that share a common visual language and created an imagined community of collectors who are connected by class status.

In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson connects the text and the visual in his study of the combined function of the census, map, and museum to create classification systems that positions the world as bounded and therefore knowable, what Anderson identified as an essential aspect of the nation as it allowed for the definition of not only the nation itself but also what is outside or "other."[278] Encouraging a particular way of appreciating the print, the

[277] Also termed the invented political consciousness of a limited, sovereign community. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd edition (London and New York: Verso, 1983/2006) 6-7.

[278] Ibid 184-185.

Prairie Print Maker's connection of text and image defined a shared way of looking, a connoisseurial practice, that can be learned by those able to afford the gift print. Making this learned way of looking available with the purchase of an associate membership, members imagined themselves as connected a particular class of collectors who share this skillset.[279] By creating a shared sense of taste through acts of consumption, regional print clubs such as the Prairie Print Makers played a critical role in providing audiences in the Midwest a means of expressing distinction when other means might not be available to them. Promoting a visual literacy that was rooted in the landscape, the Prairie Print Makers constructed a middle-class ideal of community and engaged citizenship that was rooted in the geographic center of the United States rather than coastal regions that were more widely publicized in the national discourse.

Conclusion

The Prairie Print Makers remained an active organization for thirty-five years, closing in July of 1966. In the final letter to associate members announcing the club's closing, the organization highlighted the transformational role of the club's educational initiatives. "In 1931, when our society was organized, the public generally were not as well informed about the graphic arts, not as familiar with contemporary print makers as they would like to be… We feel satisfied that we have made a good record, and a valuable contribution to print makers and print collectors."[280] Suggesting that the club was closing as

[279] This connection of text and image can also be seen as part of a larger movement away from the primacy of the text that defined the growth of nationalism and towards primacy of the visual that continues to play an increasingly pivotal role in connecting imagined communities to today. Ibid 182

[280] James Swann to Associate Members, July 27, 1966. C.A. Seward and the Prairie Print Makers, MS 2013-03, Box 1 FF:2, Wichita State University Libraries.

they achieved their goal in promoting the graphic arts rather than a result of waning interest in associate and artist membership, the organization made sweeping claims as to the impact of their club on the national growth of printmaking practices.

While these broad assertions might lend the individual print club an outsized importance in the history of American graphic arts, this chapter reveals thar the print club movement played a dynamic role in developing regionally diverse audiences interested in contemporary printmaking practices. Establishing the Prairie Print Makers' associate membership as an imagined community, this chapter points to a shared class consciousness that regional print clubs promoted through their memberships. Placing different locations from across the United States into the framework of the associate gift print, the Prairie Print Makers both promoted regional diversity and defined the nation as bounded, knowable, and contained for its associate members. Presenting the Prairie Print Makers in context of both regionalism in American art and the larger history of print clubs in the United States, this chapter establishes that print clubs were essential spaces for supporting a diverse range of artists including women and commercial artists who did not receive the same representation as their male peers working in connection with traditionally dominant, New York City-based art galleries.

Chapter 3: The Philadelphia Print Club and Black Printmaking Workshops at Midcentury

Introduction

In 1928, Allan R. Freelon became the first Black artist to exhibit at the Philadelphia Print Club. A groundbreaking moment for the recognition of printmakers of color in Philadelphia, Freelon's participation encouraged a network of Black artists to exhibit, join, and even make work at the Print Club during the 1930s and 1940s. In this chapter, I illuminate these artists' works and associations with the Print Club to investigate how they navigated the segregated landscape of American art. Through this close study I suggest that print clubs played a critical role in maintaining and supporting both artists and audiences' engagement with printmaking practices from the closure of the federally sponsored printmaking workshops of the 1930s to the growth of the contemporary workshops of the 1960s.

Questions Posed by Existing Literature

Scholarship surrounding the production of prints during the 1930s and 1940s has largely emphasized both the prominence of federally sponsored art programs and the gravitational pull of the New York City art world. This chapter examines networks of artists that have been positioned as peripheral to the New York City art world as well as private arts organizations in order to expand the existing narratives surrounding American printmaking. By focusing on a regional network of artists, I suggest that including Philadelphia in a larger discourse on regionalism allows scholars to understand the negotiation of national and local concerns that many artists navigated while working under the national shadow of the New York City art world.

This chapter also speaks to a growing field interested in presenting a more diverse narrative of American art. Within the 2020 *Routledge Companion to African American Art History*, art historian Blake Bradford's essay, "Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now: African American Artists in Philadelphia since 1940," provides a broad historical overview of many of the understudied figures working in the region, setting the framework for new scholarship such as my own to dive deeply into the working practices of these individual artists.[281] I suggest that the network of Black artists' works that my dissertation addresses has been overlooked as they complicate traditional narratives regarding style and regional unity that have surrounded Black art since the Harlem Renaissance. Claiming that these Black artists are a critical link between federally sponsored printmaking during the 1930s and the contemporary workshops of the 1960s, I am not interested in a mere recovery of artists and works who have been neglected within the history of American art. Instead, this chapter highlights their narratives as integral to a larger history of printmaking and print clubs to illuminate the complexity and depth of the story of American art.

Founding and Development of The Philadelphia Print Club

The Philadelphia Print Club was part of a second wave of print clubs founded in the United States that sought to capitalize on the growing popularity of etching.[282] The

[281] Bertha Jaques to Ruel P. Tolman, July 1, 1928, DGA Special Exhibition Files 1925-1926, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

[282] While a strict chronology of the club's history is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is important to establish both the critical role women played in the founding of the organization and the ways in which the Print Club membership diversified over time. The first wave of etching clubs began during the 1880s and were often organized following a European model established during the Etching Revival. Many of these organizations died out by the 1890s, however a new generation of artists began establishing clubs during the 1910s following the popularity of the Chicago Society of Etchers and the continued association of the Etching Revival with the fashionable and elite tastes of Europe. For a further discussion of the history of American printmaking see James Watrous, *A*

organization grew out of a rising interest in the medium following a 1914 exhibition in the home of one of the founding members, Mrs. Laurence Eyre. According to the art critic Dorothy Grafly, "the Philadelphia Print Club began as little more than a pleasant thought in the minds of a few print enthusiasts who, glancing through the pages of an art magazine, chanced upon a print that struck their fancy, and decided forthwith to hold an exhibition."[283] The following year, the nascent Print Club organized an exhibition of contemporary prints at the Philadelphia Art Club with the aid of W.H. Nelson, the editor of *The International Studio*. Bertha E. Jaques, one of the contributing artists to this exhibition, encouraged this growing interest in printmaking in the region through a subsequent visit to Philadelphia. Drawing upon her experience as a founding member and secretary of the Chicago Society of Etchers, Jaques provided the Philadelphia Print Club with both a model of a successful club and logistical support as the Club sought to expand their reach nationally.[284]

Following the success of this first exhibition, a group of seven Philadelphia-based collectors, five of whom were white women, officially founded the Print Club in 1915. The executive committee of the newly formed Print Club described their motivations to prospective members. "After careful thought it has seemed best to organize a club which shall appeal for its support to the print lovers of the city, and which shall open, in a central and convenient neighborhood, an etching and print shop, attractive in appearance, and under

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Century of American Printmaking 1880-1980. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984) 28-29.

[283] Dorothy Grafly, *A History of the Philadelphia Print Club* (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Print Club, 1929) 1.

[284] Grafly, 3 and the Print Club's archives contains several letters from Jaques with help coordinating traveling exhibitions, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

the management of persons qualified to conduct it not merely as a business but as an artistic venture."[285] Suggesting that the Print Club occupied a more "artistic" space as opposed to a mere "business" venture, Club members positioned their organization as distinct from traditional gallery settings. Instead, the Club saw their mission as more closely aligned with the support of artists and the arts in their own communities.

The Print Club's 1923 annual further details what organizers saw as the distinction between the Print Club and the commercial gallery setting:

> The Print Club does not enter into competition with commercial art dealers, but covers a field which the latter do not and cannot profitably develop; its constant endeavor is to hunt out and place before the public the best work of contemporary workers in the graphic arts, and at the same time to stimulate a general interest in prints by exhibiting and having on hand for sale examples of the works of both the great masters of the past and present, as well as those of modern artists whose works show quality of excellence.[286]

Claiming that the Print Club worked with artists who might be considered less profitable, the organization saw their primary mission as educational. As part of their "altruistic" support of both contemporary and historical artists, the Print Club promoted both their definition of good taste and built communities among white middle-class women.[287] Thus, the Philadelphia Print Club can be seen not only as an importation of marketing schemes

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[285] Mary Lowell Lloyd, Anne V. von Moschzisker, and Alice McF. Brinton, "The Print Club," November 15, 1916, Box 1 Folder 2, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[286] "Report of The Print Club, 1923" (The Print Club Incorporated, Philadelphia, PA, n.d.), Box 7 Folder 2, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[287] According to Grafly, during its founding, "finances were often a source of anxiety, and more than once the expense of the venture darkened its prospect of success. Was it possible for the Club to enlist sufficient popular support to render it self-sustaining, or was it, rather, the altruistic gesture of so small a minority that its appeal, vital to the few, might not surmount the wall of public indifference?" Grafly, 4.

developed by European gallerists during the Etching Revival but also as an offshoot of Progressive Era values and organizations.[288]

In 1921, the organization filed the Print Club's charter which highlighted the Club's goal to create community among print collectors, many of whom were white, middle-class women.

> [The Print Club] is formed to foster a love of the graphic arts, to unite the print lovers of Philadelphia for social communion on subjects of common interest, and better to enable them to render practical service to those engaged in etching and kindred fields of endeavor, by encouraging and stimulating an interest in their work, through exhibitions and other such means; and particularly to encourage American artists by furnishing opportunities for them to address and instruct those who care for prints.[289]

Here, the Print Club set their primary goal for the club as the formation of social connections through the discussion of art making, placing the support of contemporary artists as secondary. As a result of these priorities, the Print Club often supported collectors and amateur printmakers rather than working artists during its first two decades.

The benefits members received for their dues also demonstrated the Print Club's orientation towards collector members over working artists. "The members are entitled to use the Club rooms, to participate in a series of teas, held every other Friday afternoon during the winter months, to attend numerous exhibitions, lectures, discussions and demonstrations by leading distinguished workers in the graphic arts, and they receive a

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[288] While not engaged in progressive reforms, the interest in fostering communities for the arts and city beautification through social organizations led by women can be seen as a parallel cultural strand. For a discussion of the impact of the culture of social reform see Laura R. Fisher, *Reading for Reform: The Social Work of Literature in the Progressive Era* (Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota Press, 2019).

[289] "Charter of The Print Club," 1921, Box 1 Folder 3 Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

discount on all purchases."[290] Unlike other print clubs of this period, practical resources for artists such as a shared printing press were not highlighted as part of their membership benefits in their annual reports. Focusing almost entirely on the social and financial benefits available to collectors in their publications, the Club clearly oriented themselves towards a burgeoning group of middle- and upper-class art collectors. What is remarkable about this orientation within Philadelphia is how many of these collectors were women.

Led almost entirely by a female board of directors, president, and secretary from its founding, the Print Club was organized by a group of white women interested in both bettering themselves and their community. One way in which the Club achieved this goal was through regular teas in their club house. Hosted by one or two frequently female Print Club members, the teas were open to all members as well as guests.[291] While the teas occasionally allowed Club members to meet a visiting artist, they primarily offered the opportunity for members to socialize.[292] Anne von Moschzisker, one of the Club's founders' unpublished "Yearbook" for the club from 1928 described the regular teas as "an institution of the Print Club. These teas are not social occasions alone; they afford opportunities for viewing exhibitions, meeting the makers of prints, many of the most distinguished of whom are entertained by the club, and for the exchange of ideas on the subject of art which the club

[290] "Report of The Print Club, 1923-1924" (The Print Club of Philadelphia, 1924), Box 7 Folder 2, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[291] Members were allowed to bring one guest but were encouraged not to repeat past guests as to encourage an expansion of the membership.

[292] For example, of the sixteen teas held during academic year from 1927-1928 hosted by fourteen women members, nine had guests of honor "Teas, Receptions, Lectures and Demonstrations at the Print Club October 1927-May 1928," Box 7 Folder 3, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

was formed to advance."[293] Although acknowledging the social function of the teas, von Moschzisker's emphasis on the advancement of art that occurred within the space of the Print Club highlights the Club's dual function for the women members: both a socially acceptable space for white, often middle-class women to claim an independent role outside of the home and an arbiter of what these club leaders identified as good taste.

At the end of the nineteenth century, white middle class women increasingly claimed spaces for themselves outside of the domestic sphere. Termed the "New Women," these women received further education then their mother's generation; however, they continued to prize community service as a socially acceptable forum for public engagement within a gendered division of space.[294] While print clubs were not engaged in reform on a broader social level, they did see their work as providing both beauty and education to fellow community members. A theme which continued into the 1930s, the Print Club's annual report from 1932-1933 encapsulates this sentiment with the claim "the harder the battle of life, the keener the need for beauty."[295] Therefore, the Print Club became a socially acceptable space for women to engage in the community outside of the domestic sphere, as spreading an appreciation of prints was seen as part of a larger goal of civic improvement.

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[293] Anne von Moschzisker, "Unpublished 'Yearbook,'" c 1928, Box 5 Folder 6, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[294] While not political in its orientation, the Print Club was one of numerous women's clubs that proliferated in the period surrounding the passage of the nineteenth amendment. For a further investigation of these organizations see: Jeanne H. Schmedlen, *History of Women in the Pennsylvania House or Representatives, 1923-2001* (Harrisburg: The Pennsylvania House of Representatives, 2001).

[295] "Annual Report 1932-1933," Box 8 Folder 2, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Allowing white women to claim a space outside of the home, the Club made it their mission to promote, distribute, and support what they identified as good art in the Philadelphia community. By suggesting that prints could fulfill the need for beauty in the lives of urban Philadelphians, the women of the Print Club claimed that they were providing a much-needed service to the city. As von Moschzisker's description of the club house from 1928 states, "our home is a house useful and a house beautiful."[296] Here, club leadership explicitly linked their goal of beautification with civic value.

During the 1930s, the Print Club placed a particular emphasis on their promotion and dissemination of works of "beauty." When discussing the impact of the Great Depression on the Club, the Annual Report from 1930-1931 suggests that the outlook of the Club is bright precisely because of its promotion of the beautiful. "In spite of the troublesome times, anxieties and perplexities, the report of the Print Club is cheerful. Just why this is so, it is difficult to tell. Is it not perhaps because the things of the spirit, the beautiful things of life, are what are needed most in these restless days?"[297] The Print Club's Annual Report of 1940-1941 makes clear that the production and dissemination of beauty is essential to both the "spirit" and the maintenance of America's democratic ideals. Describing the mission of the Club to new members, the annual report concludes "among American printmakers, freedom it is our job to help maintain. To help artists to self-expression of the beauty of the soul in terms that bring happiness to others is what we can and must do. Our war work must

[296] von Moschzisker, "Unpublished 'Yearbook.'"

[297] "Annual Report 1930-1931," Box 8 Folder 1, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Bourdieu argues against a Kantian understanding of beauty as being innate, but instead sees beauty as being defined by the bourgeoisie and perpetuated through the class structure he suggests the aesthetic sense becomes the sense of distinction. Bourdieu, *Distinction 56*-57.

not be all aimed at Europe—here in Philadelphia the fabric of our own institutions must be kept untorn."[298] Here, the Print Club expresses an interest in promoting their definition of beauty, that which brings "happiness to others." By supporting a particular style of artist financially, the Print Club suggested that they are not merely commissioning a print but taking an active role in the war effort through the cultivation of a particular set of aesthetic ideals.

While federally sponsored art programs also encouraged the production of art as an essential aspect of the democracy, these organizations allowed artists take diverse approaches to style. Federally sponsored art programs had as their primary goal to give meaningful employment to artists and promote a distinctly American form of modern art rather than re-presenting an imported idea of European art or notion of beauty.[299] An exhibition review in the *Philadelphia Record* from 1938, describes this distinction between federally sponsored artist's works nationally and local artists who were supported by the Print Club. "Contrasted with the national display of prints held recently at the Art Alliance, the exhibition [at the Print Club] reveals that Philadelphia printmakers are less preoccupied with the lithographic medium and while our artists are interested in what they see around them they are, as a group, less violently proletarian."[300] While not explicitly framing the work featured at the Philadelphia Print Club as beautiful, the reviewer uses classed language

[298] "Annual Report 1940-1941," 1941, Box 9 Folder 1, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[299] For a further discussion of the role of federally sponsored art programs in the development of American modernism see Saab, *For the Millions: American Art and Culture Between the Wars*.

[300] "The Gallery Gazer's Notes: Print Club Annual Presents Varied Cross-Section," *Philadelphia Record*, January 2, 1938, Volume 122, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

to define the works by Philadelphia printmakers supported by the Print Club as representative of an elite or refined taste.

The Print Club promoted a particular type of art that expressed refinement and distinction through the expression of beauty in both their annual exhibitions and their commissions. The Print Club's commissions became a particularly powerful source of support for artists during the Great Depression, either prior to the establishment of federally funded programs or when qualifying for aid through federally sponsored art programs proved difficult. In these instances, the Print Club acted as an interim aid organization, brokering commissions between artists and collector members. The annual report from 1930-1931 describes one such instance, most likely that of the Pinto brothers' commission from the Print Club:

> Aid to artists is a pleasant part of our work. It is a pleasure to record an incident that occurred 12 days ago. The fact that a Philadelphia etcher, whose work is most excellent, was in need of financial aid, in fact, was breaking under the strain, was brought to our attention. We called three women members of the Club on the telephone and stated the case. Two of these women immediately gave orders to have etchings made of their gardens, and a check for $400.00 will be sent this month to the needy artist.[301]

Here, the Print Club brokered the commission of an etching depicting members' gardens. While these exact commissions have yet to be identified, comparing Pinto's distinct stylistic approaches to creating etchings as compared to his more modernist woodblock prints, illuminates the stylistic qualities the Print Club defined as "beautiful."

Pinto's *Independence Hall* from c.1930 uses etching and drypoint, which were considered more conservative printmaking mediums by the 1930s (figure 1).[302] Pinto creates

[301] "Annual Report 1930-1931."

[302] For a further discussion of the expansion of subject matter and style within fine art printmaking from the 1920s to the 1930s see Langa, *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York*.

a bustling park scene employing intaglio in this print. Pinto's short scratches into the plate both highlight the lively atmosphere of the public space and call attention to the individuality of artist's hand. Etchings were traditionally prized as they were thought to capture the artist's hand as he or she scratched directly into the matrix. This sketchy quality is particularly seen in the trees at the top of the image that vary from thick, deep scratches to light, almost fleeting squiggles. Comparing this work to the artist's woodcut practice, an example of which is *Factory* from ca. 1930, reveals the Club likely commissioned an etching precisely because of its more traditional style within the artist's repertoire (figure 2). Executed at roughly the same period, *Factory* focuses on the dynamic intersection of bold lines and crisp geometric forms. While not completely devoid of narrative and figures, this woodblock takes a more modernist approach towards subject and style as opposed to the artist's more traditional etchings.

Comparing these two different styles of prints which stem from the artist's choice of two different printmaking techniques, we can see that by commissioning an etching from Pinto, the Club was upholding traditional approaches to the creation of the beautiful within American printmaking. According to Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, defining beauty is a critical aspect of defining class consciousness.[303] Both the emphasis on "beauty" throughout the Print Club's publications and annual

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As Langa describes, printmakers had already begun to challenge conservative printmaking preferences during the 1920s by experimenting in "new media" such as lithography and linoleum prints, laying the foundation for the explosion of modernist prints in both subject matter and style during the 1930s. Langa, 13-15.

[303] While primarily defined in opposition to other, working class tastes, the Print Club's return to tradition reveals that membership was aimed not at the "ruling classes" but at the petite bourgeoise and the middle brow tastes. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 58.

newsletters from the 1920s and 1930s and the interest in banal subject matter for commissions such as members' gardens, the activity of the Print Club can be seen as a desire to return to and perpetuate styles and subject matter that have already been deemed fine art. This further reification can be seen as a distancing from the everyday lives and experiences of the working class. Therefore, beauty becomes coded language for class distinctions enacted and enshrined in the space of the Print Club.

Berthe von Moschzisker, the second director of the Print Club and daughter of the founder Anne von Moschzisker, noted that the Club's leadership involved upper- and middle-class collectors but did not engage with working class non-artists in these early years. The Club only expanded to include "doctors, lawyers, advertising executives, engineers etc." during the 1930s, but still had yet to engage Philadelphia's a broader working class. "One public we have not reached – and I wish I knew how to do it–is the working man. I was in Sweden and Denmark last summer. The artists there told me that the factory workers etc. bought paintings for their homes. They did not feel that they were secure or successful until they did so. Here they buy television sets, automobiles and dishwashers."[304] Here, I want to highlight that the Club explicitly links the enjoyment of beautiful art with class status. Therefore, the enjoyment of prints in the space if the Print Club can be understood as a marker of social distinction.[305] While the Club marketed itself as a space to educate Philadelphia residents in the arts, this inability to "reach" certain working professionals suggests that lay membership in the Club was only truly open to certain social classes.

[304] Ibid 2.

[305] Ibid.

By positioning itself as an arbiter of beauty, the Club provided members with a means of expressing distinction even during the Great Depression. On average, the Philadelphia Print Club maintained high membership levels throughout the Great Depression. The annual report from 1932-1933 calls particular attention to this anomaly. "The loyalty of our members has been marvelous. At a time when everyone is saying 'No one will join anything, every one [sic] is resigning'—you got us 60 new members. We have 37 more Artist Members than two years ago. 50 Annual Members increased their dues to Contributing Membership."[306] The annual reports from 1925 to 1939 indicate that total membership levels were consistently high throughout the 1930s, hovering at roughly 700 members.[307] This striking number suggests that the Print Club served a critical role in the lives of its members during the Great Depression. When other markers of distinction might not have been available to upper- and middle-class patrons due to financial constraints, the Print Club occupied an essential space for members to define and promote understandings of good taste and therefore class distinction.

One particular subset of membership that nuances this narrative, however, was the substantial growth of the artist membership during the 1930s. During the mid-1920s the Philadelphia Print Club maintained an artist membership of approximately sixty.[308] By 1939,

[306] "Annual Report 1932-1933," Box 8 Folder 2, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[307] During the 1930s, 1931 had the highest annual membership of 772 members in total while 1939 had the lowest membership of the decade at 675. During this decade, artist and junior memberships (both membership levels with lower annual dues) increased dramatically. Box 7-11, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[308] In April 1928, the Club's monthly membership record lists 61 artist members. "Membership Record for the Month Ending in April 30th, 1928," n.d., Box 7 Folder 3 Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

artist membership ballooned to a sizable 171 members.[309] Although artist members benefited from lower dues as compared to annual members, this dramatic increase in artists looking to align themselves with the Print Club is important to note. In the following section I will explore the possible reasons for the influx of artists members; first examining the increasing support the Print Club gave to its artist members struggling financially and second investigating the opportunities for professionalization and distinction that came from their association with the Club.

The Print Club acted as an interim aid organization prior organization of the WPA in 1935. As discussed previously, the Club coordinated commissions for artists facing financial hardships. The Annual Report from 1931-1932 details similar such situations facing many artists during a particularly difficult time of year.

> One of the most delightful features of the Club's work is the tangible and prompt aid that we have been able to render artists. I have listed before me the names of nine artists and two other individuals who have been helped promptly by the sale of their work this winter when help was sadly needed. In one instance, two original drawings were sold within twenty-four hours. At Christmas time 123 small lithographs were sold for an artist who sadly needed help.[310]

By coordinating the sale of work between lay members and artists, the Club made it possible for artists to maintain their employment as artists. This aspect of the Club's work can be

[309] "Membership Record," February 1939, Box 7 Folder 3 Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[310] "Annual Report 1931-1932," Box 8 Folder 1, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

seen as a predecessor to or, during the WPA years, an alternate avenue of support for working artists.[311]

Print Club members also took it upon themselves to provide direct aid to artist members. In 1934, the Club organized the Artist Assistance Fund to give regular disbursements to artists struggling financially. The 1933-1934 Annual Report describes the founding and early logistics of the fund. "An Artist Assistance Fund was created by funds raised [at] auction from the sale of prints generously donated by members and artists. The president appointed a committee of three to administer this fund."[312] According to available archival documentation, the Artist Assistance Fund gave regular disbursements to local artists, many of whom were Club members, in amounts ranging from five to seventy-five dollars.[313] Acting as an alternate aid organization from 1934 to 1948 and again in 1957, the private citizens of the Print Club mirrored the activities of the federal government but on a local level, with Philadelphia collectors directly aiding Philadelphia artists. Despite the financial constraints faced by many during the Great Depression, the fact that private citizens felt the need to support local artists points to the critical role everyday individuals saw art playing in building and sustaining communities during this period.

As demonstrated above, the Great Depression spurred a shift in the Print Club from an organization for collectors to appreciate prints to one which placed primacy on the

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[311] Through both the Print Club and the WPA, artists were paid upon completion of their work. It is important to note that in the case of the Print Club, private citizens purchased these works while the WPA used federal funds to support artists' works entering public collections.

[312] "Annual Report 1933-1934," Box 8 Folder 3, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[313] "Artist Assistance Fund Records," 1935-1934, Box 1 Folder 2, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

support of contemporary working artists. This trajectory became even more pronounced under the direction of Bertha von Moschzisker, the second director of the Philadelphia Print Club. The daughter of two of the Club's founders, von Moschzisker began her twenty five-year tenure as the Print Club's director in 1944.[314] Von Moschzisker note in her biography that when she first became involved with the Print Club, the Club featured comparatively conservative work and approaches to printmaking. She suggested that she made it her mission to keep up with new developments in both the production and reception of prints, aligning the Club with the current practices of contemporary printmakers.[315]

Discussing the Print Club's founding directive to support the work of contemporary artists, von Moschzisker suggested that the Club had moved away from this objective under the first director, and she sought to use her tenure to further refocus the Print Club on this goal.[316] An announcement for the Artists Workshop echoes these sentiments:

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[314] Von Moschzisker suggested she was almost destined to become the director of the Print Club writing that she had "always been suspicious that I was conceived on same fire-escape Print Club was (see Club history) and blame my present position as Director of Print Club entirely on pre-natal influence." Berthe von Moschzisker, "Bertha [Sic] Von Moschzisker," 1955, Box 5 Folder 10, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[315] Von Moschzisker writes "eleven years ago when I came to Club most work being shown there was in black and white and of a conservative nature. There has been a tremendous change in print scene during these eleven years. More interest now in experimental techniques, mixing medium… No longer thought of as something we put away in a portfolio--not thought of as something to hang on wall." Ibid.

[316] Von Moschzisker wrote, "(see the history of the Club for purpose it was founded for). In order to better fulfill this purpose, I started the Artist's Workshop for print-makers. It meets Wednesday evenings and drawing and painting class is on Thursday. In early days of workshop Hayter, Schanker, Barnet, Moy etc. taught in it. But as Phila. Art schools gradually extended their own print-making sources and facilities for their alumni, the workshop has shrunk in enrollment and had to curtail some of its activities." Ibid. In an interview with Anne Schuster Hunter Von Moschzisker describes the club's first director who served from 1924 until her death in 1944, Mrs. Andrew Wright Crawford as a "social climber," going so far to state that she was "not the right person for the job. She didn't really like artists." Oral history interview with Berthe von Moschzisker, 1990 November 26, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

> The Print Club was founded thirty years ago to give artists a place to exhibit, a place to study and to stimulate interest in graphic mediums. In order to more completely fulfill our original purpose, we are organizing a Graphic Arts workshop in our second-floor gallery. The Artist's Workshop will be open to all interested artist members of the club who may join by subscribing to a fee of $30.00 a term… This is not to be a class or school, but to be for artists who are interested in technical research in graphic methods.[317]

Von Moschzisker led one of the first initiatives to refocus the Club on the support of practicing artists, likely impacting the growing number of Club's artist members. Understanding its founding and development the origins and development of the Artist's workshop is critical for placing the Print Club's a crucial yet understudied space for midcentury printmaking.

In the spring of von Moschzisker's first year as the Club's director, Stanley William Hayter won the Club's prestigious Charles M. Lee prize for his submission, *Laocoön* from 1943 to the Club's annual exhibition (figure 3). While von Moschzisker had not heard of Hayter prior to his entry, she invited the artist to participate in a one-man exhibition at the Print Club following his successful showing. Through this exhibition, von Moschzisker learned more about Hayter's influential workshop in New York and invited him to lead a similar workshop once a month at the Philadelphia Print Club.[318]

The Artist's Workshop was initially marketed as a continuation of Hayter's Atelier 17 workshop. As the Print Club's announcement for the workshop states "Mr. Hayter has

[317] "Artist's Workshop," Box 10 Folder 3, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[318] Oral history interview with Berthe von Moschzisker, 1990 November 26, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; For a further exploration of the artists working directly with Hayter's workshop in New York see Christina Weyl, *The Women of Atelier 17: Modernist Printmaking in Midcentury New York* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019).

organized similar groups in Paris and New York."[319] Connecting the Philadelphia workshop to modernist printmaking occurring in two of the international centers for artistic production, the Print Club positioned Philadelphia not as a provincial offshoot of New York, but as the next great hub of artistic innovation. The workshop's inaugural class consisted of seventeen of the Club's artist members with Benton Spruance elected the monitor for the first term.[320] Growing to over twenty-six members in 1947, the group even had a waitlist as printmaking materials and space were limited.

The Print Club charged thirty dollars for the workshop however, they offered scholarships for veterans and solicited donations of class materials from Club members.[321] This support of veterans returning home from war through educational initiatives that sought to formalize the professionalization of artists parallels the early growth of art departments that proliferated under the GI Bill.[322] In an oral history interview from 1990, Von Moschzisker suggested that the Artists Workshop served an educational niche for artists experimenting in printmaking at midcentury which was taken over by formalized art departments across the United States. "[The workshop] was needed back in the early days, when there was less being done at the schools. Now Tyler has a good one [printmaking department], The academy of fine arts has some… [but] The Hayter Workshop was needed

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[319] "Artists Workshop," Box 1 Folder 6, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[320] "The Print Club's Artist's Workshop," Box 10 Folder 1, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[321] "The Print Club: Artist's Workshop," June 20, 1947, Box 10 Folder 3, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[322] For a further discussion of the impact of the G.I. Bill on the professionalization of artist during the postwar period see Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

at that time because the art schools weren't doing anything."[323] Occupying a critical space between the end of the WPA and the institutionalization of printmaking practices in both university art programs and contemporary printmaking workshops, the Artist's Workshop supported a regional interest in printmaking practices.

The Artists Workshop fulfilled this niche role by both providing technical support for printmakers and encouraging innovative approaches to a variety of techniques. During the workshop meetings, artists brought their own plates and Hayter provided guidance on their experiments with intaglio. Hayter also kept the workshop members up to date with his latest innovations in printmaking's technical processes.[324] While Hayter traveled to Philadelphia once a month to lead these workshops, the group continued to meet every Wednesday on the Print Club's second floor.[325] Members of the Workshop received access to materials to create prints using not only intaglio processes, but also planographic techniques such as silkscreening and lithography. While workshops were held during the

[323] Oral history interview with Berthe von Moschzisker, 1990 November 26, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Clinton Adams, who became the Associate Director of Tamarind the one of the leading printmaking workshops of the 1960s when it was founded, was one of the leading proponents of the institutionalization and instruction of printmaking in Masters of Fine Arts programs, began teaching printmaking at UCLA in 1946, suggesting this period was ripe for the foundational growth and support of printmaking practices. For a further investigation of Adams's perspective on the shift of midcentury printmaking see Clinton Adams, "American Prints, 1913-1947: A Reexamination at a Century's End," *North American Prints, 1913-1947*, David Tatham, ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006). For a further investigation of Adams's role in Tamarind see Adams, *The Tamarind Papers*.

[324] Oral history interview with Berthe von Moschzisker, 1990 November 26, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[325] As the group expanded, the workshop was divided between more senior artists meeting on Monday nights while younger artists and those searching for more technical instruction continued to meet on Wednesdays. According to Von Moschzisker, this division came as result of the "the older men did not wish to have to work on the same night as any of their recent pupils." Bertha Von Moschzisker to R.S. Saltus, June 26, 1945, Box 10 Folder 1, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

evenings, participants were able to visit the Club on their own to these materials during the daytime.[326]

In addition to providing materials, the workshop offered technical advisors in other techniques beyond intaglio, one of which was the local Black artist Allan Randall Freelon.[327] Tapping Freelon to be one of the workshop's advisors, von Moschzisker drew on Philadelphia's regional expertise in printmaking. While I will dive deeper into an analysis of Freelon's involvement with the Club in subsequent sections of this chapter, I suggest that von Moschzisker was deliberately creating a direct connection between the existing institutional knowledge of printmaking within Philadelphia and global leaders in modernist printmaking through her selection, positioning Philadelphia as a national center for the production of prints.

Focusing on Freelon's groundbreaking role in the workshop program, this dissertation sheds light on Black artists' critical and often understudied contributions to midcentury American printmaking. To thoroughly investigate these contributions, I will first contextualize the network of Black printmakers working in Philadelphia during the 1930s and 1940s to reveal how they negotiated the city's racially coded spaces. Focusing on the figure of Freelon, I suggest that the artist developed a strategy of artistic code switching to express both professional status and taste to different audiences depending on his artistic goals.

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[326] "The Print Club: Artist's Workshop."

[327] Bertha Von Moschzisker, "Director's Annual Report," 1946, Box 10 Folder 1, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Allan Freelon's Use of Code Switching and his Involvement with the Philadelphia Print Club

From its founding, the Club provided both a social space for these white, middle-class patrons and support for contemporary artists making prints in an academic style. However, beginning in the 1930s, the Club expanded both its mission and membership. Allan Randall Freelon was one of the pioneering figures in this increasingly diverse group of Print Club members, going on to encourage other Black artists to exhibit, join, and make work alongside him at the Philadelphia Print Club. Over the course of his career, Allan Randall Freelon sought both recognition for established Black artists and support for up-and-coming Black art students. A detailed discussion of Freelon's biography and his role as an influential art teacher in the Philadelphia public school system is beyond the scope of this chapter.[328] However, it is important to establish Freelon's desire for the recognition of Black artists in the larger field of American art and the means through which he achieved this larger goal. Examining the artist's diverse works on paper as well as his institutional affiliations, I suggest that Freelon developed a form of artistic code switching which allowed both himself as a black man and his art to move between racially coded spaces. Paying particular attention to issues of materiality and place, this chapter illuminates how Freelon claimed a space for himself as a Black artist within the segregated landscape of American art.

Code switching as first developed within the field of linguistics; however, the term has been reclaimed and employed by a variety of disciplines and even within pop culture to

[328] Bradford, "Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now: African American Artists in Philadelphia since 1940," establishes Freelon's influential role in the Philadelphia public school system.

explore issues of race and ethnicity as they play out in a larger cultural context.[329] Uriel Weinreich first coined the term "code switching" during the 1950s as a derogatory term to describe the mixing of languages by bilingual speakers.[330] Contemporary linguistic scholarship, however, has revised the usage of this term to be "skilled manipulation of at least two overlapping sections of grammar," emphasizing the difficult negotiations speakers engage in when moving between two different systems of language.[331] The sociolinguist Penelope Gardner-Chloros investigated how this term might be applied to individual works of art.[332] I am interested in further expanding this term to examine how artists might use different visual languages throughout their larger career to move between spaces and speak to different audiences.

The term "code switching" was not used during Freelon's period; however, recent scholarship on African American experiences of linguistic marginalization have combined the idea of code switching with W.E.B. DuBois concept of "double consciousness," a term that would have been familiar to the artist.[333] For DuBois, double consciousness describes the psychological impact of racial segregation and oppression as the "sense of always

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[329] NPR even has a popular podcast by journalists of color devoted to issues of race and ethnicity called "Code Switch," "About The Code Switch Team: Code Switch: NPR," accessed January 16, 2020, https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/04/05/176351804/about-us.

[330] Uriel Weinreich, *Languages in Contact, Findings and Problems.* (New York: Linguistic Circle of New York, 1953).

[331] Thuy Nguyen, *Code Switching: A Sociolinguistic Perspective* (Hamburg: Anchor Academic Publishing, 2015) 14.

[332] Penelope Gardner-Chloros, "Code-switching in Art: From Semiotics to Sociolinguistics," *Sociolinguistic Studies* Vol. 4 No. 3. 2010.

[333] John Russell Rickford and Russell John Rickford, *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English* (New York: Wiley, 2000); Vershawn Ashanti Young, "'Nah, We Straight': An Argument Against Code Switching," *JAC* 29, no. 1/2 (2009): 49–76.

looking at one's self through the eyes of others."[334] The linguists and father son team John Russell Rickford and Russell John Rickford, in particular use DuBois's framing of double consciousness to describe the "oscillation between black and white (or mainstream) poles" within language patterns.[335] Russell Rickford have established code switching as a tactic for negotiating the presentation of the self as defined by W.E.B. Du Bois's conception of double consciousness, a term which the artist surely would have been familiar with. Therefore, I suggest that Freelon used the fluidity and multiplicity of the printmaking medium to explore different stylistic approaches as a tactic for navigating the segregated spaces of artistic production.

I will now turn to analyze Freelon's works on paper to establish how the artist employed code switching in his artistic practice with particular attention to his use of the white space of the Philadelphia Print Club. Allan Freelon became the first Black member of the Print Club in 1929. Freelon made the local news reports in papers aimed at both white and Black Philadelphians for his historic status. The African American newspaper, the *Philadelphia Tribune* dedicated a small section of a column on the paper's front page announcing, "Allan R. Freelon Elected to the Print Club." The *Tribune* called Freelon's club membership "a signal honor for Mr. Freelon as he is the only person of color admitted to membership."[336] While an article from a white newspaper, likely *The Daily Times*, lists Freelon's membership as a sign of a growing prosperity for African Americans during this

[334] W. E. B Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Cosimo, 2007 reprint from 1903).

[335] Rickford and Rickford, *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English, 9*.

[336] "Allan R. Freelon Elected to Print Club," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, May 16, 1929, Volume XLV, No. 25 edition.

period. “Alan Freelon, colored… has recently been accepted as a member of the Print Club. During the past year he has received honorable mention from the Harmon Foundation. He is also director of art in the colored schools here in the city.”[337]

The Philadelphia Tribune’s announcement described the specific print the Club honored with this recognition. “The work that gained this recognition for Mr. Freelon was his toned view in the perspective of “The Elverson Building at Night,” likely referencing Freelon’s 1928 aquatint, *Elverson Building Philadelphia* (figure 3).[338] Here, Freelon used the narrow streets of Philadelphia to draw the viewer into his nocturnal cityscape. Freelon enhanced this perspectival view through the technically difficult aquatint technique. A laborious printmaking technique aquatint requires the artist to first cover the copper plate in a thin resin seen in the grainy texture of the night sky. The artist must then combine precisely timed dips in an acid bath with a careful stopping out technique to create a variation in tone seen in the delicate gradation of ink from the dark blacks of the surrounding buildings to the gleaming white light that emanates from the top of the skyscraper. Using aquatint to create both this tonal progression and overall texture, Freelon highlighted his understanding of the technically difficult printmaking technique for his audience at the Print Club. Freelon presented this scene entirely without people, reducing the city to its geometric architectural forms. Through this romanticized view, Freelon called

[337] Kain O’Dare, “City’s 185,000 Negroes Prosperous and Gaining Steadily in Culture,” n.d., Allan Randall Freelon papers, 1895-2008. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[338] “Allan R. Freelon Elected to Print Club.”

upon tropes in European and American printmaking from the turn of the century seen in works such as Joseph Pennell's *Cortland Street Ferry* from 1908 (figure 4).[339]

This was not Freelon's first exhibition at the Print Club. Just one year before, Freelon became the first Black artist to exhibit at the Print Club in a show organized by the Art Teachers Association of Philadelphia. While I have yet to locate the exact works included, titled *The Tower* and *Composition* respectively, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* described these two works as "full of atmosphere and motion."[340] This description in comparison to the artist's printmaking practice from this period suggests that *The Tower* and *Composition* would have shared formal similarities with the artist's existing etchings such as *Resting*, dated from 1925-1929 (figure 5). Here, Freelon contrasted large open spaces with delicate scratching to create a picturesque harbor scene reminiscent of Whistler's *Thames Set* from the nineteenth century etching revival (figure 6).[341] Drawing on earlier printmaking traditions in both of his works for the conservative, white space of the Philadelphia Print Club, Freelon made a bold claim for his prominent status as a master printmaker that his audience at the Club surely would have recognized.

At the same time that Freelon exhibited at and joined the Print Club, Freelon created both spaces for Philadelphia's emerging Black artists and a place for himself within the larger New Negro Arts Movement. As part of these efforts, Freelon established a literary

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[339] For a further exploration of Pennell's influence on the role of American print clubs see the introductory chapter.

[340] "Art Teachers Hold Print Club Exhibit," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 10, 1928, Allan Randall Freelon papers, 1895-2008. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[341] Freelon's friend and fellow artist Dox Thrash was also known to own a set of Whistler's etchings printed from a canceled set of plates and encouraged Raymond Steth to study Whistler. Ittmann, *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered,* 10, 149.

journal in 1927 aimed at fellow Black artists titled the *Black Opals* (figure 7). The publication's explicit goal was to foster the work of emerging Black artists, according to the back-cover's mission statement.

> *Black Opals* is the expression of an idea. It is the result of the desire of older New Negroes to encourage younger members of the group who demonstrate talent and ambition. *Black Opals* does not purport to be an aggregation of masters and masterpieces. These expressions, with the exception of the contributions by recognized New Negro artists, are embryonic outpourings of aspiring young Negroes living for the most part in Philadelphia. Their message is one of determination, hope, and we trust power. [342]

To accompany this dynamic message, Freelon used a bold, graphic style for his inaugural cover illustration. Here, Freelon placed an elongated, nude female at the center. Her slender body reaches up almost as if pointing to the journal's title, while she stands between two palms, creating a generalized tropical background. Using a stark contrast of light and dark, Freelon creates a powerful, direct image made even more so by the poignant caption, "Hail Negro Youth." The graphic forms of the figure and strong outlining call to mind Aaron Douglas's illustrations from Alain Locke's seminal text, *The New Negro: An Interpretation* from 1925 (figure 8).

Labeling the *Black Opals* publication, a "movement," Freelon further aligned his work in Philadelphia with notable figures of the Harlem Renaissance by amassing an editorial board that included such luminaries as Langston Hughes and Alain Locke, himself. Freelon continued his association with Alain Locke as a result of one of his next illustration projects, a work titled *The New Negro* that served as a frontispiece to the May 1928 issue of

[342] "Black Opals," *Black Opals* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1927).

the *Carolina Magazine* (figure 9).[343] Part of a series of in which the university magazine invited Black writers to edit the publication, Freelon's drawing accompanied essays by Alain Locke and Charles Johnson. While the publication had a diverse audience, Freelon must have had the editorial board in mind when titling his drawing "The New Negro" as it placed his image in direct conversation with Locke's publication just three years prior.[344]

In this image, Freelon positions the figure of a Black woman at the center of a nocturnal landscape. Stepping forward, both her gaze and gesture urge the viewer's eye upwards, into the starry landscape. The arching band of the milky way draws the viewer back to the ground where, on the left-hand side of the image, a tree with no leaves and dark, snarled branches hang the bodies of two men who are victims of lynching, a haunting reminder of the racial terror many Black people encountered during this period and still face today. On the hill immediately behind the two lynched bodies, three crosses stand silhouetted by the dark black of the night sky.

Possibly a reference to the three crosses on Calvary Hill, here, the New Negro is the one who is resurrected from this racist oppression. In this image, Freelon suggests that the New Negro is renewed specifically by her embrace of African history as she stands in front of a larger than life version of an imagined Dan Mask, an actual example of which Freelon might have seen during his studies at the museum Barnes Collection that began just one year

[343] For a further exploration of the *Carolina Magazine*'s "Negro Numbers" see, Charles J. Holden, *The New Southern University: Academic Freedom and Liberalism at UNC* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 2012) 43-44.

[344] Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro* (New York: Athenium, 1969); For a further exploration of Locke's biography and teachings see Jeffrey C. Stewart, *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018).

before.[345] Here, Freelon's prominent display of the African mask can be seen as aligning himself with Locke's appeal to Black artists to embrace what the scholar termed an "ancestral heritage" in his essay "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts."[346] Locke specifically used African masks to illustrate this essay, further cementing the connection between Freelon's image and Locke's writings.

By comparing Freelon's The New Negro with works shown at the Print Club such as the *Elverson Building, Philadelphia*, we can see the artist's interest in exploring a range of stylistic approaches and spaces for exhibiting his work at the same moment in his career. The art historian James A. Porter noted Freelon's range of subject matter and stylistic diversity in his works on paper.

> Negro Etching has not followed a steady course; neither has its subject matter. This is shown by the work of Allan Freelon… Freelon, possibly the most versatile of this little group of etchers, has worked in several branches of the art... Throughout this range he has preserved a uniform quality of expression…The difference in the technical approach and effect of his etchings and his paintings offers an interesting study in aesthetic values and in the psychology of the artist as well.[347]

Other critics were more disparaging of Freelon's aesthetic choices as one review, likely by a white author, of a 1929 Harmon Foundation exhibition stated, "The lack of real

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[345] Freelon studied at the Barnes Foundation from roughly 1927 to 1930. Classes consisted of discussions of Barnes's text, "The Art in Paintings," as well as access to his collection. In order for Freelon to gain permission from his supervisors in the Philadelphia public school system to attend these courses during the week, Barnes seems to have had John Dewey intervene. "We sent a copy [of our petition] to Professor Dewey who knows about the educational system of Philadelphia and our efforts to make our resources available to the public through the medium of the art supervisors." Albert Barnes to Allan Freelon, October 2, 1928, Allan Randall Freelon papers, 1895-2008. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.; The Barnes Foundation Secretary to Allan Freelon, November 24, 1928, Allan Randall Freelon papers, 1895-2008. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[346] Alain Locke, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," *The New Negro* (New York: Athenium, 1969).

[347] James A. Porter, *Modern Negro Art* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1992) 158.

Negro Spirit and the impressionist style of several of the artists, including Allan Freelon, was evidence that these artists had sacrificed their racial identity to gain in a white art world."[348] How might we then interpret the diverse range of stylistic approaches the artist explored throughout his career? I suggest that linguistic code switching provides an interesting framework to view the artist's stylistic diversity. For Freelon, the malleability of print in particular was an essential tool for claiming a space for himself as a Black artist.

Freelon continued to employ code switching throughout his career, adjusting his stylistic language to address distinct audiences in both racially segregated and regionally distinct spaces, seen through a comparison of Freelon's *Market Wagon* exhibited at Philadelphia Print Club in 1934 and *Window Shoppers* which was shown in the Second Biennial Exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1936. While both of these spaces featured predominately white artists during this period, Freelon claimed a place within these exhibitions by employing two discrete stylistic languages each aimed at his regionally distinct audiences. In *Market Wagon*, Freelon again created an academic work similar to other he previously exhibited at the Print Club. *Market Wagon* also presents a romanticized image of the city as the urban worker at the center does not have any distinguishing features, almost blending into his surroundings. Here, Freelon again drew upon tropes in European American printmaking seen in works such as James Abbott McNeill Whistler's 1879-1880 etching *The Doorway* (figure 12).

In comparison, Freelon's *Window Shoppers* used a social realist style more in line with Whitney Studio regulars such as Peggy Bacon and Mabel Dwight (figure 13). In this

[348] *The Cleveland News*, 1929. Clipping in Allan Randall Freelon papers, 1895-2008. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

print, Freelon contrasts the rounded forms of the posh onlookers to the luxurious window display with the emaciated form of a man asking for money on the right. Using exaggeration to communicate social critique, Freelon's *Window Shoppers* demonstrates Freelon's almost simultaneous interest in exploring a contemporary style through his printmaking practice. Freelon's close study of the regional distinctions between these two exhibition spaces, one more conservative and the other modernist, further demonstrates the artist's ability to mold the printmaking medium to achieve a range of stylistic approaches.

While there is a tendency within art history to view an artist's formal trajectory as linear progression, marginalized artists' uses of different formal approaches to art making throughout their career particularly during the 1930s often has left aspects of their work either understudied or disregarded as their styles do not move towards a singular focal point or conform to a specific idea of what their art should look like. By establishing code switching as a tactic for moving between different racially coded spaces and even within the New Negro Arts Movement, I suggest that Freelon's diverse formal approaches present a new way of interpreting and engaging with the artistic practices of marginalized artists.

Freelon's ability to move between different styles depending on his context can be seen as further evidence of the artist's masterful ability to engage in code switching, ensuring his artistic message has as large an audience as possible. Freelon's interest in moving between different aesthetic styles suggest that the stylistic division between modernist and traditionalist did not reflect the lived realities and working practices of marginalized artists as they struggled to negotiate a place for themselves and their work in the larger art world.

Philadelphia's Network of Black Printmakers and the Creation and Use of Institutional Associations by These Artists

In this section, I examine a growing network of Black printmakers Freelon engaged with in Philadelphia to reveal the connections Black artists formed regionally and the ways in which they used these networks to gain recognition for their work. I will first establish the foundation and growth of this network of Black artists beginning with the Tra Club of Philadelphia, moving next to the Philadelphia Fine Print Workshop, and looking finally at the Pyramid Club. By calling attention to the thriving network of Black artists working together regionally, this paper goes on to explore how these artists then used the space of the Print Club in order to push against the structural racism that defined the regional landscape of artistic production, creating new spaces for the reception of their work.

Both Thrash and Freelon studied printmaking under Earl Hortner at the Graphic Sketch Club at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s, suggesting that they were likely well aware of both one another's work and the artistic potential of printmaking prior the explosion of interest in the graphic arts through federally funded workshops. Both Trash and Freelon then went on to exhibit prints at the 1932 exhibition of the Tra Club of Philadelphia, at which Sam Brown was the acting president.[349] While little is known about the Tra Club, it was founded as an African American art association in order to "bring together artists and art-loving people of the community in a concerted effort to create and foster an interest in all phases of artistic expression and endeavor, assuring artist and layman alike thoughtful consideration of the tastes and wishes of each."[350] Holding their exhibitions at the southwest branch of the YWCA, the predominately white board of the organization

[349] *The Tra Club of Philadelphia Annual Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings*, December 11-12, 1932 as cited in Ittmann, *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered* 6, 148.

[350] Ibid.

encouraged the Club's activities as part of their larger mission to "serve the black community."[351] While the Tra Club was innovative in both its support of Black artists and critical role Black artists and curators played in organizing these exhibitions, it was part of a long tradition of organizations sponsored by or led by white people as a philanthropic endeavor.[352] It was not until the founding of the Pyramid Club in 1937 that there was a space entirely funded and controlled by African Americans that promoted the appreciation and dissemination of art in Philadelphia.

These networks of Black artists in Philadelphia continued to grow in the space of the Fine Print Workshop which employed several Black artists.[353] One of five branches of the FAP to have a Fine Print Workshop, the Philadelphia workshop was known for both its technical innovation and diversity.[354] While at the workshop, Thrash developed the carborundum mezzotint with the aid of white artists Hugh Mesibov and Michael Gallagher.[355] Touted as "one of the most important developments in the technique of fine

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[351] Ibid.

[352] See Barnes Foundation as local Philadelphia example, see the Harmon Foundation as a national example.

[353] While Freelon was not employed in the federally Fine Print Workshop as a result of his fulltime employment in the city's public-school system, he was well aware of both the technological advancements of African American printmakers and the program's reputation for supporting the artistic careers of artists of color. For a further exploration of the impact of the WPA on black artists' printmaking practices see Leslie King-Hammond, *Black Printmakers and the WPA* (Bronx, NY: The Lehman College Art Gallery, 1989).

[354] The five branches were located in Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Cleveland. Other branches produced prints but did not contain a workshop space for artists to meet in and experiment on their prints together. For a further investigation of the Philadelphia Federal Art Project see Cindy Medley-Buckner, "The Fine Print Workshop of the Philadelphia Federal Art Project," *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered* John Ittmann ed. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2002) 43-51.

[355] Dox Thrash, "The History of My Life," ca 1960, Reel 4408, Archives of American Art: Smithsonian Institution.

print reproduction since Aloys Senefelder invented lithography in 1796,"[356] the carborundum mezzotint offered a new means of achieving a greater depth of tone within intaglio printmaking. Thrash, in particular, used this technique to create both intimate portraits such as *Mary Lou* (figure 14) and scenes that celebrate Black culture such as *Glory Be!* (figure 15). While the carborundum mezzotint technique did not take off in the United States, Black artists played a key role in positioning Philadelphia as a center for printmaking by diverse artists that has since gone under recognized.

While at the Fine Print Workshop, Thrash worked alongside other black artists including Claude Clarke, Raymond Steth, Samuel Brown, and Bryant Pringle. [357] Philadelphia had one of the largest groups of Black printmakers employed in their federally sponsored workshop, second only to New York City.[358] In a 1990 interview Steth celebrated the WPA's impact on Black artists' careers:

> These artists worked in an integrated and collaborative environment, I thought that that was the greatest vehicle for the development of many talented black people in all of the art forms -- it gave them the facility and the

[356] "Printers Hail WPA Artists Carborundum: New Print Process Opens Wider Field of Tones in Black and White," *The Chicago Defender*, December 28, 1940.

[357] Medley-Buckner, 44. Although historian and printmaker Allan Edmunds claims, the "WPA's Federal Art Projects (1935-1943) sponsored print workshops in urban communities such as those in New York City and Philadelphia and introduced African American artists to print media," Freelon and Trash's work with Hortner beginning in the 1920s clearly suggests that African American artists had long been aware of and employing print media in their own work. Allan Edmunds, "The Printed Image: Process and Influences in African American Art," in *The Routledge Companion to African American Art History*, ed. Eddie Chambers (New York: Routledge, 2020) 395. I would like to further encourage us to reframe the narrative surrounding Black artists and the WPA to suggest that artists such as Dox Thrash had a strong working knowledge of printmaking and it was through the WPA that they were first given institutional support to further their artistic production and disseminate their knowledge of printmaking.

[358] Medley-Buckner, 44. For a further discussion of the foundation of the WPA print workshops see, Cindy Medley-Buckner "The Fine Print Workshop of the Philadelphia Federal Art Project," Ittmann, *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered* and King-Hammond, *Black Printmakers and the WPA*.

> instruction and so forth free, which allowed them to develop their talents and as a result of this, many of these people became very great at what they were doing and many of them became very famous people.[359]

Thrash also described his experiences working with this integrated workshop environment in a letter to Ellen Woodward, the director of the Women's and Professional Projects division of the WPA. "As a negro artist I would like to commend the entire staff for their impartial and fair treatment to all those employed. My work in this department has been shown every consideration, and I am writing this letter in appreciation for the aid given and beneficial results I have obtained therefrom."[360] Both of these quotations suggest that not only did black artists find the lack of overt racism in the federally funded workshop notable during this period but also later scholarship has been greatly interested in the integrated status of the working space.

The WPA was an important space not only for its push towards racial integration that has been well established in the literature, but also as a result of the networks that developed among black artists that have all too often been underrecognized. The photographer Myron Krasney's staged images documenting the Fine Print Workshop often depict pairs of artists working either together on a print or in close proximity to one another on their own individual works. Although some images depict integrated pairs such as in figure sixteen, other such documentary photographs specifically pair Black artists together. For example, in figure seventeen, Claude Clarke and Zeb Johnson work together to pull a lithograph and in figure eighteen Clarke and Thrash are seen working in front if the large printing press. This

[359] Oral history interview with Raymond Steth, 1990 April 28. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[360] Dox Thrash to Ellen Woodward, July 8, 1937 as cited in Medley-Buckner, 45.

pairing is particularly important to note as it places a seated Clarke working while Thrash stands opposite to him looking over a print. The placement within this image suggests that Thrash is reviewing and encouraging Clarke's forays into the technique the older artist invented, visually positioning Thrash as the more experienced printmaker.

Clarke's 1940-1941 painting *Drafting* is particularly interesting to explore in light of his involvement with the Fine Print Workshop (figure 19). Here, Clarke focuses the viewer's attention on the central figure of a Black architect working carefully over an drafting table. While the central figure is not engaged in the process of printmaking, the painting recalls the printmaking process through the scratching away of paint to create the architect's design on the drafting table. Revealing the brown paint layered under the white paint of the table, Clarke would have used a similar scratching technique when creating an etching in the Fine Print Workshop. Choosing to focus in on the figure of an Black professional in the process of creating art, Clarke recalls the other working Black artists that surrounded him every day in the federally funded workshop.

Building on the black artists' networks established in the WPA, The Pyramid Club became one of the most critical spaces African Americans built for themselves during the 1930s in Philadelphia. Unlike the earlier Tra Club, The Pyramid Club was entirely funded and organized by and for African Americans. The Pyramid Club began producing art exhibitions in 1941. According to a 1947 exhibition catalogue "the Club's gallery aim was to foster the progressive elements in contemporary American painting and bring a closer bond between the creative artist and the public."[361] The Pyramid Club's inaugural exhibition

[361] Humbert Howard, ed., "Catalogue of the Seventh Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture" (The Pyramid Club, Inc., 1947), Allan Randall Freelon papers, 1895-2008. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 3.

put the work of the pioneering African American artist and one-time Philadelphia resident, Henry O. Tanner, in conversation with a new generation of black artists including Dox Thrash, Sam Brown, and Claude Clarke.[362]

While the Club's exhibitions allowed for ongoing conversations among black artists that had been occurring at the Tra Club and in the WPA, the Pyramid Club's exhibitions were also open to white artists. The artist and Pyramid Club member, Romare Bearden defended this policy, suggesting that all-black exhibitions limited the reception of these artist's works. "There seems to be little reason for a continuation of all Negro group shows. Aside from the fact that there are no ethical characteristics that warrant such exhibitions, they tend to hamper the Negro painters by fostering dual standards."[363]

While a history of the Pyramid Club is both beyond the scope of this chapter and the subject of previous, under-recognized scholarship it is essential to the argument of this paper to note both the important connections that artists formed in the space of the Pyramid Club and how the Pyramid Club fits within Philadelphia's regional history of civic organizations. The art historian David R. Brigham's catalogue essay "Dox Thrash and the Pyramid Club," discusses the critical national networks that artists entered into by joining the Pyramid Club and their larger impact on the reception of their work. Bringham suggests that the Pyramid Club played a key role in fostering a connection between local Philadelphia artists such as Dox Thrash and national figures in the Negro Arts Movement including Alain Locke.

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[362] Leslie King-Hammond, *Humbert Howard: Philadelphia Painter* (Philadelphia, PN: Levy Gallery for the Arts in Philadelphia and Moore College of Art and Design, 1996) 12. Tanner was a critical point of reference for many Black artists in Philadelphia as he set a precedent for both white acceptance and violence towards artists of color in the region.

[363] Romare Bearden, "Why the Pyramid Club Annual Is Open to All," *Catalogue of the Seventh Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture at The Pyramid Club, Inc.*, 1947.

> Locke was a font of opportunity in the African American art community and having him as the keynote speaker at the Pyramid Club's inaugural exhibition was a cultural coup. White philanthropists, such as those who organized the exhibitions for New York's Harmon Foundation and awarded the Rosenwald Fellowship, trusted Locke's recommendations regarding worthy African American artists. Thrash clearly understood Locke's importance and had already benefited from an association with him.[364]

Bringham goes on to detail Thrash's letters to Locke and their related exhibitions, suggesting that as a result of this close relationship Locke served as an advocate for Thrash and other Philadelphia artists.[365] While Bringham alludes to the fact that the Pyramid Club was not the only exhibition space available to African American artists within Philadelphia, he does not explore how artists created local networks through the Club in order to further their art regionally.[366] I suggest that the close connections these artists made through the Pyramid Club impacted the further integration of arts spaces regionally, which can be seen particularly through the example of the Print Club.

Brown, Freelon, Clarke, and Thrash all exhibited with the Pyramid Club on different occasions. Freelon even spoke at the opening of the Club's Fourth Annual Exhibition of Art in 1944 at which a selection of nine watercolors and carborundum mezzotints by Thrash along with eleven watercolors and oils by Brown were shown together in the Sahara Room Gallery, suggesting that Freelon would have been well acquainted with the multigenerational network of Black printmakers that had grown at the WPA.[367]

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[364] "The Pyramid Club Presents Negro Fine Arts: Program of Opening Fourth Annual Exhibition of Art" (The Pyramid Club, Inc., 1944), Pyramid Club exhibition catalogs, 1943-1955. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[365] Ibid.

[366] Ibid, 61-62.

[367] At the Fourth Annual Exhibition of Art in 1944 Sam Brown showed the following works: *Global War*, *Dew Drop*, *Dr. George Ellison*, *Councilman James H. Ervin*, *Mr. Fiske Kimball*, *Nassau Native Smile*, *"50" Shillings*, *Nassau Mood Indigo*, *Zoie's Sister*, *Zoie*, and *Fort Charlotte*. Dox

Although there is little extant correspondence between these Black artists, we know that Thrash and Freelon developed a close relationship. In the Pyramid Club's inaugural exhibition from 1941, Thrash exhibited an oil painting titled *Freelon*. Freelon also exhibited *October Hills* in the same show, suggesting the artists were clearly in dialogue with one another. While I have yet to locate either of these paintings, a print titled, *Freelon's Barn* from 1939-1941 further points to a closeness between the two artists (figure 20). An image of Freelon's barn at his home and studio in Telford, Pennsylvania that he named Windy Crest, the print highlight's the two artists' close working relationship. Ittman suggests that it was a result of this close friendship that Thrash eventually became a member of the Print Club.[368] These two figures would have been seen as part of a pioneering, older generation of black artists. While there was friction between the older and younger generations of black artists, Steth's eventual involvement with the Print Club suggests that he would have wanted to place his work in further conversation with this older generation and support their efforts to gain recognition for black art in Philadelphia through the space of the white institution.[369]

African American Artists and the Philadelphia Print Club's Workshop Program

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Thrash exhibited *Sun Drenched*, *City Plevins*, *Seated Figure*, *Reflection*, *Saturday Night*, *Mount Zion*, *Mother, Child and Father*, *Coal Breaker*, *8th and Ridge*. "The Pyramid Club Presents Negro Fine Arts: Program of Opening Fourth Annual Exhibition of Art" (The Pyramid Club, Inc., 1944), Pyramid Club exhibition catalogs, 1943-1955. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[368] "Thrash did not join the Print Club until the fall of 1946 (perhaps with the encouragement of his friend Allan Freelon who had been hired earlier in the year as the workshop's technical advisor in lithography. Ittmann, 36.

[369] Membership in the Pyramid Club declined significantly at the end of the 1950s and in 1961 the club removed 100 members becoming a club by invitation only from then on out. The club closed in 1963 as a result of an IRS investigation for failing to pay Social Security and withholding taxes for employees. Bettye Collier Thomas, "Creating a Place for Ourselves: The Rise of Humbert L Howard, Black Art, and The Pyramid Club," *Humbert Howard: Philadelphia Painter* Leslie King-Hammond ed. (Philadelphia: Levy Gallery for the Arts, 1996) 14-15.

Following Allan Freelon's pioneering involvement with the largely white space of the Print Club, the growing network of Black printmakers in the region began to exhibit at the Club's annual exhibitions. A comprehensive record of each artist of color to show at the Print Club during this period is difficult to identify, as the Print Club's records do not document the racial identity of their exhibitors. Therefore, I will focus this section on Freelon, Thrash, and Raymond Steth's notable involvement with the Club' workshop program and its legacies within the region.

In 1945, Freelon renewed his artist membership after a nearly a decade of intermittent participation. Ittman suggests in a footnote that Thrash also had gaps in his association with the Print Club as a result of the racism that the Black artists likely encountered with the majority white Club.

> The hiatus in Thrash's participation in the Print Club annual is not surprising given the evident bias of some of the officers of the club. In the minutes of the monthly meeting of the officers of the Print Club of Philadelphia… in which the new director, Bertha von Moschzisker was appointed, is the following sentence: "It was the sense of the Meeting that colored artists should not be asked to exhibit at the all Philadelphia Artists Show." The recommendation was ignored by von Moschzisker.[370]

This undercurrent of racism and segregation that Freelon and Thrash encountered makes their repeated participation in the Club's annual exhibitions and Freelon's employment with the largely white Club remarkable.

In 1946, Freelon was hired as an expert in lithography for the Club's Artist's Workshop with Hayter. For each of his visits, Freelon was paid twenty dollars and did not

[370] Ittmann, *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered*, 156. After reviewing the Print Club's records at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, this is the only such documented event of overt racism in the Club's annual meeting minutes prior to 1960. This lack of evidence does not mean that these instances were rare, instead this omission more likely means that racism would have largely gone undocumented by the Club's white officers.

have to pay the sizable class fee of thirty dollars.[371] Positioning himself as a regional expert in the field alongside one of the most established leaders of midcentury printmaking, Freelon claimed a space of distinction for himself as a Black artist. Although Freelon's available archive does not contain a direct reference to the artist's motivations for working so closely with the white club, we can surmise from his writings that both his status as an integrating force and the recognition he gained as an artist would have been important to him. In his 1935 article "The Negro in Art," Freelon celebrates the legacies of trailblazing Black artists such as Henry Ossawa Tanner. "The pioneer work of the above mentioned artists opened the way for younger men and women of their race who felt the urge of self expression, to go forward as students both in America and in Europe."[372] Freelon concludes his article with a desire that, as Black artists are increasingly given the recognition they deserve, their work will no longer be segregated from a larger narrative of modern art.

> The Negro artist is steadily gaining a place for himself in the field of fine arts, and in the final analysis, I am convinced that his contribution will be evaluated solely on its intrinsic merit, and not because he is either white of black, tall of short, but because, approaching his task sincerely, with something definitive to say, and equipped by study, to say it intelligently, he will be heard, listened to, and appreciated.[373]

Freelon's 1935 article echoes key points in W.E.B. Du Bois's 1903 essay "The Talented Tenth" that suggests that education is a key tool for combating the systematic racism and oppression of Black people in America. Du Bois's text claims that through

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[371] "The Print Club: Artist's Workshop"; "Artist's Workshop Checking Account" (The Print Club, April 30, 1946), Box 10 Folder 3, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[372] Allan Freelon, "The Negro in Art," *The Philadelphia Independent*, December 22, 1935, 13.

[373] Ibid.

classical training, what he terms "a talented tenth of the Negro race" will emerge as "leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people… The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men."[374] Freelon was clearly influenced by Du Bois's writing seen not only in his advocacy for education and pioneering leadership in the field of art but also in his use of a more classical approach to form in his works that he intended for a diverse or majority white audience. This use of a classical style to enter into a majority white organization such as the Print Club, only to encourage the involvement of an increasing number of artists of color follows Du Bois's model for fighting against the marginalization of Black artists in his article "Criteria of Negro Art."[375]

Through his connections made in the Pyramid Club, Freelon likely encouraged both Thrash and Steth to become both Club members and involved with Print Club's workshop program.[376] Thrash in particular had been exhibiting at the Club's annual exhibitions since 1939 but waited until 1946 to become a dues-paying member. Thrash likely chose this year as the workshop with Hayter and Freelon was only open to artist members. Thrash's papers at Emory University contain an announcement for the workshop from 1945 that includes details for the program as well as the note that "enrollment still open."[377] Chose this year

[374] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," in *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2018).

[375] W. E. B. Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art," *The Crisis* 32 (October 1926): 290–97.

[376] John Ittman supports this claim in regards to Thrash writing, "Thrash did not join the Print Club until the fall of 1946 (perhaps with the encouragement of his friend Allan Freelon, who has been hired earlier in the year as the workshop's technical advisor in lithography)." Ittmann, *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered*, 36.

[377] Dorothy Grafly, "Art Outlook" (Philip Ragan Associates, Inc., October 25, 1945), Dox Thrash collection, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

possibly as it was during the workshop's second term that scholarships were made available to veterans.[378]

While Ittman discusses the limited formal impact Hayter's workshop had on Thrash's experiments with a more improvisational approach to composition, I am interested in recuperating the artist's Print Club involvement to point to the critical ways networks of Black artists came together and used structures of white institutions to support their art making. The integration of the white club led by Black artists provided a new community of white artists to engage with both nationally, with one of the global leaders in the modernist printmaking movement and locally with longstanding members of the Print Club such as Benton Spruance and Morris Blackburn.[379] While Freelon did not maintain his Club membership continuously beyond his association with the workshop, there is a record of his regular correspondence with Spruance, suggesting that the workshop had a lasting impact in connecting both white and Black artists in the region.[380] Thrash however, maintained his Print Club membership until 1960, exhibiting regularly at the annual exhibitions. Thrash's continued involvement with the Club suggests that the organization provided him with

[378] The workshop committee sent out the following call for funding in support of veteran artists looking to join the workshop. "A new problem faces the Workshop. The returning serviceman. In order to be able to ask only a token fee of such men who wish to join the group, we are appealing to our members for donations towards the expenses of the second year. Already we have several ex-servicemen in the group and want more. Checks should be made payable to the "Print Club Artist's workshop." "Workshop Committee," 1945, Box 6 Folder 11, Print Club archives (Collection 2065), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Ittman also points to the scholarship fund as influential to Thrash's involvement. Ittman, 156.

[379] Other workshop participants included Walter Reinsel, Jean Franckensen, Azio Martinelli, Pjilip Blank, John Hathaway, Leonard Lionni, A.P. Hankins, Dimitri Petrov, Paul Darrow, Leon Karp, Alexander Abels, Robert Riggs, Henry Pitz, Alfred Bendiner, and Franklin Watkins. "The Print Club's Artist's Workshop."

[380] Benton Spruance to Allan Freelon, February 1954, Allan Randall Freelon papers, 1895-2008. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

institutional support and recognition for his pioneering printmaking practices well into the final years of his career.

Freelon and Thrash encouraged a younger generation of Black artists to join the Print Club following their success.[381] The Steth, who worked at the WPA with Thrash and exhibited at the Pyramid Club with both artists, eventually took over Freelon's position as a technical advisor in Print Club's workshop program.[382] Working alongside Hayter, Steth was not particularly influenced by Hayter's abstract, improvisational approach to printmaking formally as he maintained a figurative style throughout much of his career as is seen in his 1943 work *Apostolic* (figure 22).[383] Steth was, however, deeply interested in the collaborative workshop model for the production of prints as he opened his own, independent graphic arts workshop the year after the Print Club's Artists Workshop closed. Operating from 1948 to 1953 in Philadelphia, the Philographic School of Art taught both commercial and fine art printmaking. According to an oral history with Steth from 1990, the Philographic School of Art was a fully integrated organization with Black and white faculty, staff, and students. The school closed in 1952, however because of community harassment

[381] Steth exhibited his print *Reggie* from 1940 (figure 20) at the Print Club in 1941. Oral history interview with Raymond Steth, 1990 April 28. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[382] David R. Brigham, "Breaking the 'Chain of Segregation:' The Pyramid Club Annual Exhibitions," *The International Review of African American Art* 22, no. 1 (2008).

[383] While this work is prior to his association with Hayter, few prints of Steth's are known from the period after his time at the workshop. According to the director of the Brandy Wine Workshop in Philadelphia, Allan Edmunds, described his career after the WPA "his narrative style ran counter to the post-World War II trend toward abstraction, and to the art that was coming out of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Ray stopped working, as many artists of his generation did, for a lack of opportunities." "A Conversation with Allan Edmunds," in *We Speak: Black Artists in Philadelphia, 1920s-1970s* (Philadelphia: Woodmere Art Museum, 2015) 119.

by the conservative and racist climate of the McCarthy Era.[384] This destruction of spaces of Black art making that continued well into the Civil Right Movement is a further reason for the difficulty scholars face in tracing and presenting these Black lineages.

Freelon also developed an interest in the workshop format following his association with the Print Club's Artists Workshop.[385] Although Freelon had been making his own art during his summers away from teaching at his home and studio named Windy Crest, it was not until the end of the 1940s that the artist opened his studio to a larger group of art students. Oriented towards a younger generation of Black artists, the historian Cedric Dover claims that Freelon's Windy Crest studio was part of a larger workshop movement among Black artists that "produced more art than the [historically Black] colleges."[386] Dover specifically describes Freelon's workshop as part of the artist's "lifetime of distinguished service to his state."[387] Offering four hour classes on Thursdays and Saturdays, students paid $3.50 for one class or $30 for ten sessions.[388] Students focused on life drawings and still lives, but Freelon also offered instruction on printmaking techniques as exemplified in his

[384] Oral history interview with Raymond Steth, 1990 April 28. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[385] This emphasis on the Artists Workshop does not discount the influence of the artists' colony of Gloucester which he repeatedly visited earlier in his career. While he primarily worked in oils during his summers at the colony, the community of artists was likely something the artist was draw to and sought to replicate in his Windy Crest Studio. Race Relations Committee for the American Friends Service Committee, ed., "Biographical Data: Allan R. Freelon," 1948 1947, Allan Randall Freelon papers, 1895-2008. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[386] Cedric Dover, *American Negro Art* (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1960) 39.

[387] Dover, 40.

[388] Rodgers, *Allan Freelon: Pioneer African American Impressionist,* 47.

detailed notations relating to printmaking processes that are included in the same notebook with contact information for his models that he employed at Windy Crest.[389]

While I have yet to be able to identify any of the specific artists that worked with Freelon at Windy Crest, images from the artist's studio suggest that he took on several Black women artists as his students (figure 23). This community of artists and the larger legacy of Black workshops in Philadelphia has largely been neglected within the literature, likely as a result of their focus on figuration that had largely gone out of style in the post war period. Unfortunately, many of these institutions both faced systemic racial oppression and left little archival documentation available for scholars to recuperate the narratives surrounding individual artists.

Although we are unable to document the individual students that came to Freelon's studio, we can explore a similar visual experience they all would have shared, seeing Freelon's studio sign (figure 24). A metal sign that had an abstracted figure of a Dan mask at its center proclaimed to visitors both that this studio was owned and operated by an African American and a space that welcomed artists of color. While the abstracted mask faced directly out to the visitor, on either side, irregular triangular patterns marked the lower sides of the mask's face. Appearing as if it is the beginnings of another profile emerging on either side, the mask becomes visual manifestation of the artist's many facets. This sign can therefore be seen as further evidence of code switching that existed throughout Freelon's artistic career, as he embraced of an African derived aesthetics to announce his studio as a

[389] Printmaking technique workbook, Allan Randall Freelon papers, 1895-2008. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

clearly coded African American space, while largely teaching a classical approach to the figure in his studio classes.

Although there is no record of Freelon's exact workshop practice, we can derive from the artist's writings that he would have encouraged the younger Black artists who worked with him to pave their own stylistic path as he had done throughout the course of his career. In one of Freelon's essays, the artist adamantly opposed what he saw as pressure imposed by both white and Black critics to create a specific idea of Black art. Instead, Freelon claimed that he was of the "school of thought… [that] insisted that [Black artists] be accorded the same freedom of choice as that granted any other artist as regards to subject matter and means of expression." Freelon's workshop can therefore be seen as a continuation of his interest in supporting and creating places for the exhibition of Black art and the encouragement of emerging Black artists within the segregated landscape of American art during this period. Seeing the Print Club's Artist Workshop as a critical space for developing the artist's interest in the workshop format, Freelon might have envisioned his own studio as establishing a legacy of Black artists following the model of Hayter and his workshop in New York.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that print clubs played a critical and often overlooked role in creating and maintaining an interest in for printmaking between the closure of the federally sponsored art programs of the 1930s and the fine printmaking workshops of the 1960s. Through this chapter I have investigated how the Philadelphia Print Club turned from a space for white women interested in taking on more public roles to an institution that offered a platform for marginalized artists. This chapter investigates how Black artists used

the intuitional support and distinction of the Print Club to develop their artistic practices and legacies. By focusing on Freelon, Thrash, and Steth, this chapter establishes the understudied networks of Black printmakers in Philadelphia to reveal a more diverse picture of Philadelphia's artistic landscape.

While often short lived and under documented, we can see the workshops of the 1940s and 1950s owned and operated by Black artists as examples of the ways in which Philadelphia can be considered a regional hub for printmaking particularly by Black artists. Many of these workshops faced racist opposition during both the McCarthy era nationally and locally by the overtly racist police chief Frank Rizzo that impacted their everyday operations and the legacies they were able to create.[390] Despite this institutionalized opposition, many Black artists created networks of contemporary artists who celebrated the artistic power of the medium. Allan Edmunds is one such figure grew out of this regional network having attended the Tyler School of Art and exhibited at the Philadelphia Print Club. Established by Edmunds in 1972, the thriving Brandywine Workshop demonstrates that Philadelphia continues to be a central hub for contemporary printmaking by Black artists including Sam Gilliam, Martha Jackson Jarvis, and Howardena Pindell.[391]

[390] Bradford, "Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now: African American Artists in Philadelphia since 1940," establishes the role Frank Rizzo played in creating a hostile environment towards African Americans during his tenure as police commissioner and mayor from 1967 to 1980.

[391] For an introduction to the Brandywine Workshop see Allan Edmunds, *Three Decades of American Printmaking: The Bandywine Workshop Collection* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 2004).