

CHAZEN MUSEUM OF ART
University of Wisconsin–Madison
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PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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New York City Life, 1905–1940: Prints by John Sloan and His Friends and Followers
January 27 through March 25, 2007 in Mayer Gallery

The Chazen Museum of Art is pleased to present an exhibition of American realist artist John Sloan's complete set of ten *New York City Life* etchings on loan from the Caxambas Foundation of Janesville, WI. At a time when city subjects were limited largely to architectural views, Sloan shocked early twentieth century audiences with his frank, and often humorous, depictions of social life in the streets and tenements of New York. Today, this body of work provides viewers insights into an era when diverse groups of people from all corners of the globe and all walks of life first came together in the quintessential modern metropolis to create a dynamic urban culture that still informs our ideas about city living.

In 1905, John Sloan (1871–1951) began work on this groundbreaking set of original etchings that would form his first non-commissioned body of prints. Following the “Art for Life” credo of his mentor, American painter and teacher Robert Henri, Sloan looked for subject matter in his immediate surroundings—the furnished rooms, streets, shops and galleries around his 23rd Street studio. He then used his talents of observation and draftsmanship, honed by years of working as a newspaper illustrator, to record these slices of metropolitan life in his art. His prints showcased the changes occurring in New York City society before his very eyes: the growing extremes of wealth and poverty, as well as the increasing diversity of people and activities resulting from mass immigration, industrialization, and commercialization. Fashionable ladies parading down Fifth Avenue, laughing girls at the penny arcade, and working-class families sleeping on tenement roofs to escape the summer heat are among the everyday scenes he captured in his art. Although his choice of subject matter reflected his Socialist political tendencies, Sloan maintained that this work was “done with sympathy but no ‘social consciousness’.”

Also included in the exhibition are prints from the William Benton collection and the Chazen's permanent collection by Sloan's friends and followers, who were inspired by his work to record their own views of New York City life. Sloan's cohorts, a group of painters known as the Ashcan School for the gritty subject matter of their work, also explored the themes of urban entertainment, employment, domestic life, and social strata in print in the opening decades of the century. Among them, George Bellows earned renown for the lithographs of urban genre scenes—especially those depicting the popular sport of boxing—that he produced between 1916 and 1925. In the 1920s and 1930s, Edward Hopper, Reginald Marsh, Minna Citron, and other followers of Sloan and the

Ashcan School tradition, continued to examine New York's dynamic social life as representative of the American scene. With an eye increasingly turned towards the alienation, inequities and grotesqueness of city life, these artists captured the changing faces of New York from day to night, work to play, prosperity to depression, as one of the crowd or all alone.

Educational Events

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2007, 5:30 P.M.

Mayer Gallery

Gallery lecture by exhibition curator Cassie Wilkins, who is also interim curator of paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts at the Chazen. Ms. Wilkins will discuss American realist artist John Sloan's groundbreaking series of ten *New York City Life* etchings and the impact this work had on his friends and followers, including George Bellows, Edward Hopper, and Reginald Marsh.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 7:30 P.M.

4070 Vilas Hall, 821 University Avenue

Film: "New York City Life"

UW-Madison Cinematheque and the Chazen will present an evening of silent films documenting the people and life in early twentieth-century New York. Short actualities documenting places that John Sloan and his friends painted and frequented will be followed by a feature film, "Kindling" (1915, dir. Cecil B. DeMille, 84 min., 35mm), a sad tale of tenement living. All the films will feature live piano accompaniment from renowned silent film pianist David Drazin. The films will be introduced by Lea Jacobs, professor in the Department of Communication Arts, and director of UW-Madison Cinematheque. Doors open at 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 5:30 P.M.

Mayer Gallery

Gallery lecture by Nan Enstad, associate professor of history, UW-Madison "Picturing Sexual Liberation: Radical Artists' Views of Working Women in Early Twentieth Century New York." Professor Enstad will explore the role working women played in the artistic imaginations of John Sloan and his circle of radical writers, artists and activists.

Funding

Generous support has been provided by the Caxambas Foundation, the Hilldale Fund and Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin.

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The Chazen Museum of Art is open Tuesdays-Fridays 9am-5 pm; Saturdays and Sundays 11 am-5 pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to galleries and educational events is free. The museum is located on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is accessible to wheelchairs from the Murray Street (north) entrance. Parking is available at the city of Madison's ramp between Lake and N. Frances streets; and university lot 46 on Lake Street between Johnson and University Avenue. Evening and weekend parking is also available at UW Lot 83 under Fluno Center: enter on N. Frances Street and UW lot 7 under Grainger Hall: enter on Brooks Street. The museum will provide sign language interpreters for associated programs by three-week advance request to Anne Lambert, Curator of Education, weekdays, 608 263-4421. Information is also available by visiting our web site at www.chazen.wisc.edu.

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