

# RISD MUSEUM

***American Prints: Highlights from the Gift of the Fazzano Brothers,***  
March 12, 2004-May 30, 2004

Twenty years ago, the five Fazzano brothers—Francis, Henry, Joseph, Louis, and Nicholas—gave The RISD Museum and the RISD Library an exceptional group of more than thirteen hundred prints, drawings, and books. The Fazzano family, which formerly owned the Imperial Knife Company, acquired these works over three decades. The heart of the collection lies in American prints, especially those made between the two World Wars.

From late nineteenth-century etchings to bold linocuts of the second half of the twentieth, this exhibition celebrates the vitality of American printmaking and the foresight of these generous donors. The Museum especially honors the late Joseph R. Fazzano, architect of the collection, dedicated member of the Museum's Fine Arts Committee for many years, and devoted supporter of the arts.

We are grateful to Sarah Orenstein (RISD BFA 2006, Film, Animation, Video), who assisted in organizing this exhibition during Wintersession 2004 through an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation internship at The RISD Museum.

## CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Grant Wood, American, 1891-1942  
*Approaching Storm*, 1940  
Lithograph  
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.255

Born and raised in Iowa, Grant Wood rejected modernist abstraction in favor of a style that monumentalized American subjects and settings. He represents the farmer as an icon of American strength amid the bounty of the landscape.

Thomas Hart Benton, American, 1889-1975  
George Charles Miller, American, 1894-1965  
*Cradling Wheat*, 1939  
Lithograph  
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.420

Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, and Grant Wood were the leading American regionalists in the first half of the 20th century. All

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three of them reacted against the European modernism of the 1913 Armory Show in New York and looked to specifically American subjects. In 1946, Benton summarized their goal: "We agreed that unless American Art came back to dealing with things about which American artists knew something it would accomplish nothing" (quoted in Patricia Junker, *John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West*. New York/Madison: 1998, p. 74). *Cradling Wheat* depicts a harvesting scene of the 1920s in East Tennessee.

John Steuart Curry, American, 1897-1946  
Associated American Artists, American  
*Missed Leap*, 1934  
Lithograph  
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.418

Curry declared the circus "one of the most colorful phases of the American scene" (quoted by Patricia Junker, in *John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West*. New York/Madison: 1998, p. 156). In 1932, he spent three months traveling with Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus.



Grant Wood, American, 1891-1942  
*Shrine Quartet*, 1939  
Lithograph  
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.371

Grant Wood displays affectionate humor in his depictions of small-town types, such as the singers at the Shriners fraternity.

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Aaron Douglas, American, 1899-1979  
*Three Masked Figures*, n.d.  
Linocut  
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.494



Peggy Bacon, American, 1895-1987  
*Aesthetic Pleasure*, 1936  
Drypoint  
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.307

Bacon was more interested in recording the reaction of the crowd than in depicting the masterpieces displayed in the gallery. Satire of social and public scenes is the essence of urban regionalism and plays on the superficiality of art itself. The subject cleverly links the experience of the actual viewer of Bacon's print with that of the people depicted within the print who look at paintings in a gallery.

John Sloan, American, 1871-1951  
*Fun, One Cent*, from the series *New York City Life*, 1905  
Etching  
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.299

John Sloan started out in Philadelphia as a newspaper illustrator and demonstrated his humorous observation of urban life and entertainments in his breakthrough etching series, "New York City Life." In *Fun, One Cent*, the girls laugh at the naughty photographs that move within a hand-cranked nickelodeon, a precursor to the movies. A close look at *Night Windows* reveals more than just an evening scene inspired by the view outside the artist's apartment. Sloan recalled: "While his faithful wife is doing the wash downstairs my neighbor [on the roof] casts a roving eye across the areaway" (Peter Morse, *John Sloan's Prints*. New Haven: 1969, no. 152, p. 176).

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John Sloan, American, 1871-1951  
*Night Windows*, from the series *New York City Life*, 1910  
Etching on paper  
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.304



Armin Landeck, American, 1905-1984  
*Staircase*, 1942  
Drypoint  
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.297

Stow Wengenroth, American, 1906-1978  
*New York Nocturne*, 1946  
Lithograph  
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.509

Joseph Pennell, American, 1860-1926  
*Hail America*, 1908  
Etching and mezzotint  
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.884

Pennell spent twenty years in England working with Whistler and writing Whistler's biography before returning to the United States in 1904 and rediscovering New York City. *Hail America* uses the tonal technique of mezzotint to recreate the drama of New York's harbor. The younger artist, Marin, who exhibited in the modernist Armory Show of 1913, was interested not in tone, but in line and force, seen here in the jagged strokes surrounding the Brooklyn Bridge, itself a symbol of modern life.

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John Marin, American, 1870-1953

*Boats and Bridge*, 1914

Etching

Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.238

James Abbott McNeill Whistler, American, 1834-1903

*Nocturne: Palaces*, from *The Second Venice Set*, 1879-1880, published 1886-1887

Etching and drypoint with plate tone on medium weight cream laid paper

Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.24

The Fazzano Brothers' gift includes thirty prints by Whistler, one of the most influential American artists and printmakers of the 19th century. *The Lime Burner* demonstrates the artist's early realism, documenting a typical working man within the receding spaces of the London docks. Whistler deploys a variety of line quality to create the complicated spatial recession. In the later print, *Nocturne: Palaces*, he relies almost entirely on tone: the application and idiosyncratic wiping of the ink across the entire metal plate. For each printed impression, Whistler varied the color and amount of ink left on the plate to create the effects of light reflecting off the water at different times of day in Venice.



James Abbott McNeill Whistler, American, 1834-1903

Ellis and Greene

*The Lime-Burner*, from the *Thames Set*, 1859, published 1871

Etching and drypoint on medium weight cream laid paper

Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.9



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Mary Cassatt, American, 1844-1926  
*The Picture Book*, ca. 1901  
Drypoint  
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.910

