

Shine Brighter Première

File 9 The arty Thirties

Audio p. 79 – Extrait de *Royal Academy of Arts*, 2016.

Curator Adrian Locke: What's really unique about this exhibition is the opportunity to look at some truly iconic paintings that come from America, painted in the 1930s, that capture a moment of huge transition and change. This is a time when artists, and not just artists but the whole of society, are coming to terms with big change and wondering how best to move forward, how to confront the future. So, the exhibition is called 'America After the Fall' — the 'fall' being, of course, the great crash that happened in 1929 and the consequences that were felt and reverberated throughout the country for the following decade. The idea of the exhibition is really to capture the sense of profound shock to the economic social system, but then also, the manner in which America starts to reorganise, to re-group, if you like and the changes that are taking place, changes in immigration..., changes in urbanisation... and also changes in the kind of industrialisation process of the country. I suppose that names that most people will recognise would be Edward Hopper, Jackson Pollock, Phillip Guston, Thomas Hart Benton, Georgia O'Keefe, Alice Neel. Artists that have been justly lauded and collected and displayed throughout American museums from the 1930s onwards. But the single most iconic work coming to the exhibition is a painting by an artist called Grant Wood. The painting itself, I'm sure most people will recognise, American Gothic.

America after the Fall: Paintings from the 1930s, Royal Academy of Arts, 2016.

Document 1, Vidéo p. 80 – Extrait de *WETA*, 2012.

Voice 1: In April, an outsider showed up in Boise City. Arthur Rothstein was 21 years old, the son of Jewish immigrants, born and raised in New York City. He was in No Man's Land to take photographs for the Federal Government's Resettlement Administration. Rothstein's boss, Roy Stryker, believed that pictures could be a powerful tool, to show not only the multitude of problems the nation was facing, but what the government was doing about them. Over the course of 7 years, as the agency became part of the Farm Security Administration, Stryker would launch an unprecedented documentary effort, eventually amassing more than 200,000 images of America in the 1930s, taken by a talented cadre of photographers including Walker Evans, Russell Lee, Marion Post Wolcott, John Vachon and Dorothea Lange.

Voice 2: And he sent them out there with a very simple set of instructions: "I want to see their eyes, I want to see their faces, I want to see emotion. I want people to look at these pictures and not see abstraction. I want people to see folks struggling in the land."

Arthur Rothstein, *Ken Burns*, 2012.

Document 1, Vidéo p. 82 – Extrait de *Learning about Movies*, 2020.

Josh Matthews: The movie features the Little Tramp in the modern world, really the modern urban world of either Europe or America, and he shows the tramp in a variety of situations within the big modern city. The tramp is a factory worker who is more or less being oppressed as the factory surveils him. And he works just a terrible job. Well it's funny on the one hand as you watch the clip of the factory belt and the Tramp trying to screw on every little bolt as the parts go down the belt. The social commentary here is pretty obvious: factory workers have it bad, and not only that, during the movie the tramp is part of the labor union which strikes. He himself is subjected to forces that he cannot control either the factory owner himself or the factory as a corporation or as a member of the labor union which also tells him what to do. The movie is very bitter I think in telling us that the Little Tramp would prefer jail over living in society trying to find a job trying to be a good citizen. Early in the movie he in fact tries to steal food from a restaurant and deliberately gets arrested so that he can go back to jail and enjoy life in a comfortable jail cell which is better than anything else in the modern urban city.

Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* - What Makes This Movie Great?, *Learning about Movies*, 2020.

Document 1, Vidéo p. 84 – Extrait de Real Estate Report, 2023

Voiceover: The original story says that on September 20th, 1932, a photographer named Charles Ebbets was on top of the Rockefeller Center, specifically the RCA building, taking pictures of the construction progress. As Ebbets looked down he saw a group of construction workers taking their lunch on a steel beam dangling above the city below, so he snapped a picture. Well, the resulting photo ended up being titled “Lunch Atop A Skyscraper” and it quickly became famous. It was published in newspapers and magazines around the world, and it has since become an iconic symbol of New York City and the American dream. Nowadays people say that this photo sent a message about the Depression, it gave people optimism about growth and opportunity. It spoke highly of the strength of these hard-working men. It, of course, demonstrated trust and camaraderie amongst those men and most importantly it sent a symbol of hope to a struggling country.

How the Photo ‘Lunch Atop a Skyscraper’ Changed History, *Real Estate Report*,
2023.

Document 3, Vidéo p. 85 – Extrait de PBS, 2001.

Gerald Early (writer): People needed dance music maybe more than ever in America because the country was in such doldrums. So, I think people needed the escape of going to the Savoy and to those other places to dance, they needed those bands. As an antidote to the Depression, I think swing music did as much as MGM musicals to help America through.

Ken Burns (movie director): Swing provided Hollywood with its theme music, and offered entertainment, elegance and escape for a people down on their luck. Radios and juke boxes could be heard playing swing along every main street in America, providing the accompaniment for a host of exhilarating new dances: the Big Apple and Little Peach, the Shag and Suzie Q and the dance that had started it all: the Lindy Hop, now called Jitterbugging. Hundreds of bands were on the road, and young people followed the careers of the musicians who played in them just as they followed their favorite baseball players. Millions of white Americans who had never listened to jazz before suddenly filled ballrooms and theaters all over the country.

Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns, Episode 5, *PBS*, 2001.

Évaluation – Compréhension de l'oral – Guide Pédagogique

Voiceover: 1933, the depths of the Great Depression, almost 25 percent of the American labor force, more than 13 million people, out of work. Dorothea Lange, a studio portrait photographer in San Francisco, was so moved by the jobless and homeless and local bread lines and soup kitchens that she began making street portraits showing in stark black-and-white what the shortage of work and hope was doing to people who were too often and too easily unseen and overlooked. By the fall of 1935, Lange was working for the government's Farm Security Administration, documenting migrants from the Dust Bowl. Masses of sharecroppers, tenant farmers and their families traveling in wheezing over-packed motorcars between work camps and shanty towns. "I am trying here to say something about the dispirited, the defeated, the alienated," said Lange, "about the wounded, the crippled, the helpless, the rootless." Lange had personal empathy for the physically disabled. She walked with a deep limp, the result of childhood polio, which Lange said was, "Perhaps the most important thing that happened to me."

Dorothea Lange, a Visual Life, *NBC News Learn*, 2020.