

Coronet

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ABOUT PAUL MELTSNER

A NOTE ON AN ARTIST WHO IS NOT AS WIDELY KNOWN AS HE SHOULD BE

To listen to Paul Meltsner one would suppose that it must be fun to be a painter. Looking at his pictures one is compelled to conclude that life is a grim business of industrial strife, with factories shut down or picketed and armed guards killing strikers, with the survivors bearing the victims to an off-stage funeral. And yet the color is not dreary. It may be raw color, something like sulphur in its dry, yellow, powdered stage, but certainly there is neither grime nor desolation in that palette. The members of Mr. Meltsner's industrial *dramatis personae* are neatly stylized, their faces washed and perhaps their nails manicured, the difference between the guards and strikers being that the former have guns and the latter are armed mainly in that meekness with which one is supposed to inherit the earth. A wisecracker and wit at the café table, Mr. Meltsner is a proletarian artist when he works, and he works hard, he says. Which is what a proletarian artist should do.

Meltsner is young, but old enough to have gone through a number of pre-proletarian art periods. He had a grey period once. Another time he painted boats at Provincetown and also did a number of fine large-scaled

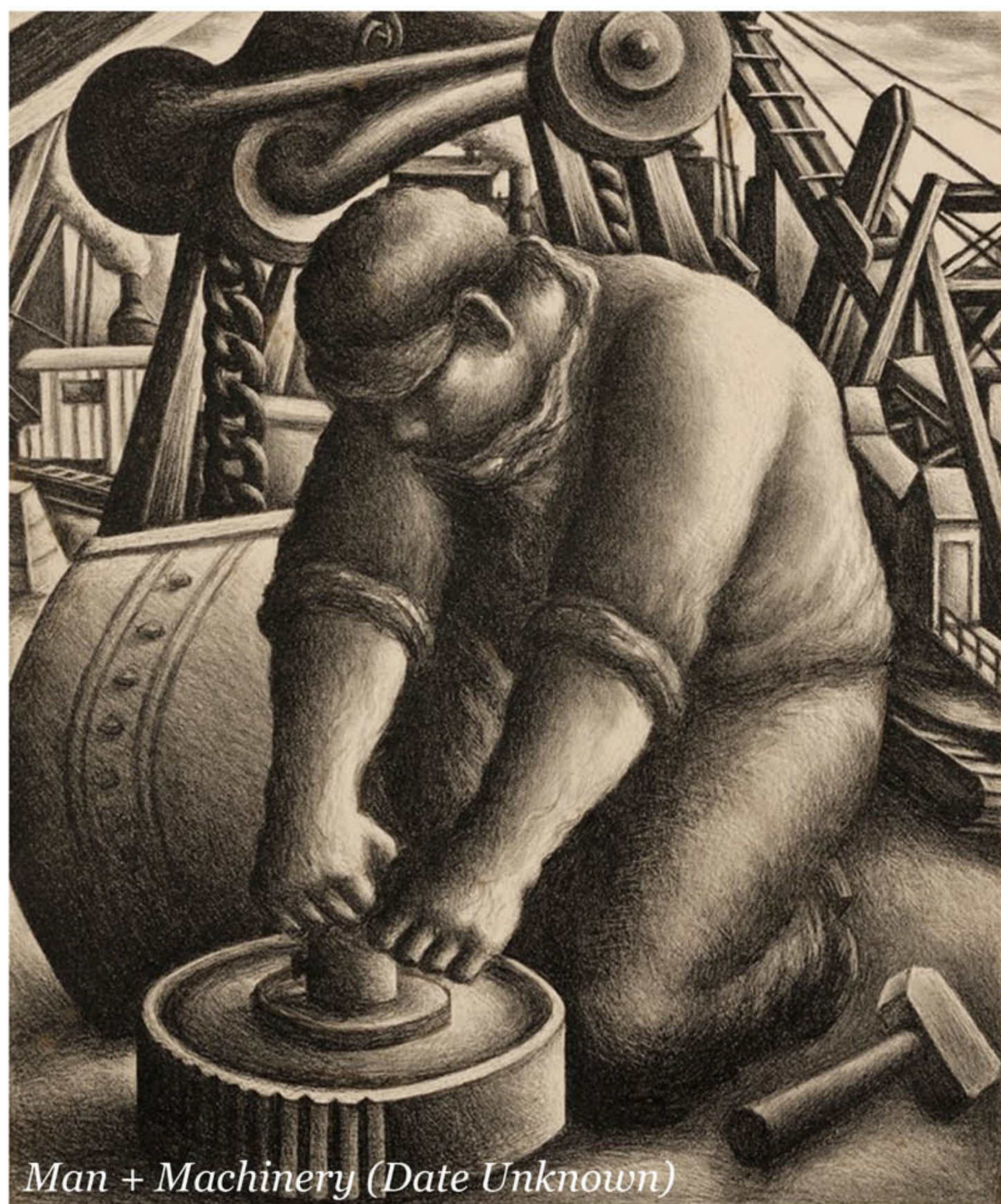


The Lockout (1935)

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flower pieces and still lives. In fact, once he painted girls. A bachelor, he is fond of girls and is especially witty when he's the center of a bevy, but he denies that he likes them as much as people say he does. But he doesn't paint them any more.

The truth of the matter may be that Paul Meltsner is at a crossroads wondering which one to take. He would like to be more popular than he is and would like to have money in the bank, both legitimate aspirations. But it is possible that they deflect him from the business of being an artist. He gives the impression of a man who wonders whether the bandwagon has passed him by or whether it hasn't arrived yet.



Man + Machinery (Date Unknown)

He exhibits frequently. He sells lithographs when he isn't selling paintings and is represented in a number of museum collections. His most suitable medium may turn out to be the water color and he has a flair for mural design, but has not yet won himself a wall on which to execute those designs. He divides his year between Greenwich Village and Woodstock, N. Y. He has an Irish terrier pup whom he calls Van Gogh, after one who was also a neglected artist.

—H. S.