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September 2009

Fact Sheet “Picturing the 1930s” Educational Web Site

The Smithsonian American Art Museum offers an educational Web site, “Picturing the 1930s,” which engages students by guiding them through the process of creating documentary films about the 1930s. The museum developed “Picturing the 1930s” in conjunction with its exhibition, “1934: A New Deal for Artists,” and in collaboration with Primary Source Learning and the University of Virginia through its PrimaryAccess Initiative at the Curry School of Education. This version of the Web site was launched in time for the 2009 academic school year; a beta version debuted in February.

The site allows online visitors to explore the 1930s through paintings, artist memorabilia, historical documents, newsreels, period photographs, music and video in a virtual, 3-D movie theater with rooms that feature the topics, “American People,” “City Life,” “Labor,” “Industry,” “Leisure,” “The City,” “The Country” and “Nature.” The site, which was developed for eighth and 11th graders studying American history, provides opportunities for students to more fully employ the use of primary source documents. Virginia Mecklenburg, senior curator, guides visitors through the Web site.

The museum has provided images from its collection of artworks from the 1930s can be used as assets in PrimaryAccess, Web-based software that allows teachers and students to create their own documentary videos. Using PrimaryAccess, any user can select images, write text and record narration in the style of a documentary filmmaker. These online videos can be created in and submitted to the virtual theater on the “Picturing the 1930s” site at americanart.si.edu/education/picturing_the_1930s, which also provides introduction and implementation tutorials that suggest ways to integrate the software and assets into the curriculum. Artworks available for use in the documentaries can also be viewed at flickr.com/groups/Picturing_the_1930s.

To learn more about “Picturing the 1930s,” other educational initiatives the museum offers to students and teachers across the country or to schedule an on-site tour, e-mail the Education staff at AmericanArtMuseumTours@si.edu or call (202) 633-8550. An online registration form can be accessed at americanart.si.edu/education/tours/form.

About the Smithsonian American Art Museum

The Smithsonian American Art Museum celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans with approximately 41,500 artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries. The museum is a leader in providing electronic resources to schools and the public through its national education program. Its National Historic Landmark building, a dazzling showcase for American art and portraiture, is located at Eighth and F streets N.W. in the heart of a revitalized downtown arts district. Museum hours are 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, except Dec. 25. Admission is free. Metrorail station: Gallery Place/Chinatown (Red, Yellow and Green lines). Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970.

Web site: americanart.si.edu.

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