



Builders of Babylon

Date

1949

Primary Maker

Samuel L. Margolies

Medium

soft-ground etching and aquatint

Description

The title of this work metaphorically compares New York to Babylon, the ancient world's exemplary urban center of labor-driven progress and human achievement. In this composition (one of several variations Margolies executed on this theme), rendered in the realist style of the 1930s, muscular workers balance on a steel girder, dwarfing Manhattan's famous skyscrapers -- including the Chrysler

Building and the Empire State Building -- below. As yet another towering symbol of progress is constructed, we are reminded that, despite periods of financial calamity, the decades before World War II were years of great architectural expansion in mid-town Manhattan. The imagery also reflects the link between the era's populism and a resurgence of nationalism. Margolies' preferred medium was etching because of the technical challenge it offered, and because etchings were conducive to duplication, and therefore more affordable to the general public.

Dimensions

Sight: 14 1/4 x 11 in. (36.2 x 27.9 cm) Sheet: 17 x 13 1/2 in. (43.2 x 34.3 cm)