

Wanda Gág and Elizabeth Olds

Minnesota natives Wanda Gág (1893–1946) and Elizabeth Olds (1896–1991) are two of the strong, courageous women who helped redefine U.S. printmaking in the early 1900s. Born in New Ulm, Minnesota, Gág trained her exuberant eye on nature and everyday objects. Her work is displayed in this gallery. Minneapolis-born Olds made lithographs and colorful screenprints about modern life, which you can see next door in Gallery 316.

People who know Gág's popular children's book *Millions of Cats* (1928) are often surprised to learn she was an equally daring printmaker. (Or that her favorite drawing surface was sandpaper.) To her eye, living and inanimate things often had a special atmosphere surrounding them, and she was determined to develop a new vocabulary to express her way of seeing. Using feathery strokes, quivering lines, and a penchant for distortion, Gág created imagery that was fiercely, proudly her own.

Wanda Gág photos used by permission of Mrs. Gary (Dolly) Harm. Photos are courtesy of the Wanda Gág Papers, Kerlan Collection, Children's Literature Research Collections, University of Minnesota Libraries.

Wanda Gág and Elizabeth Olds

Wanda Gág (1893–1946) and Elizabeth Olds (1896–1991) are Minnesota artists of uncommon individuality, purpose, and delight. Gág, represented in the gallery next door, was moved by nature and ordinary objects. The socially minded Olds, whose work is displayed in this gallery, focused on the labors, pastimes, and pretensions of modern life.

Olds was the first woman to win a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship (1926) to study art abroad. She was also committed to making prints affordable so more people could own art. Olds was part of the U.S. government's New Deal program, designed to keep people working during the economic crisis of the Great Depression (1929–39). In that program, she helped transform screenprints from a commercial process into a fresh, bold art form that was efficient to make and economical to buy.

Though they attended the same art schools in Minneapolis and New York, Gág and Olds led very different lives. Olds was inspired by the city, Gág by the country. Now they meet again in this show.

Photos are courtesy of the Elizabeth Olds Papers, Kerlan Collection, Children's Literature Research Collections, University of Minnesota Libraries. Other Elizabeth Olds photos are courtesy of the Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.