For Immediate Release:

Contact: Diana Arntzen, darntzen@niu.edu, 815-753-1936, www.niu.edu/artmuseum

Northern Illinois University Art Museum Presents New Deal Era Prints:

The NIU Art Museum’s spring “Art of the New Deal” exhibition suite opens April 8, with a reception from 4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. The suite runs through May 28, 2010 and includes *Coming of Age: The WPA/FAP Graphic Arts Division and the American Print*. This exhibition features 61 prints by 33 artists that were actively producing within the print shops of the Graphic Arts Division and includes four types of printmaking techniques: intaglio, relief, lithography, and screenprinting.

The Works Progress (later, Projects) Administration (WPA) began in 1935 as one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal relief programs to boost the Great Depression economy, improve the infrastructure of the United States, and employ tens of thousands of unemployed Americans. The WPA gave birth to the Federal Arts Project (FAP) in August of 1935, creating jobs for thousands of artists as well as promoting and enhancing the visual arts within the U.S. Projects under the FAP not only included those involved in creating and disseminating the artwork, but also had divisions that instructed community arts programs and conducted artistic research. Public art was promoted under these programs, so Americans could develop a greater appreciation for the amount and diversity of art created by FAP artists. Although the WPA/FAP ended in 1943, its legacy may be found in the works that remain, the countless artists it inspired, and the projects that formed the foundation for many state and local art education programs throughout the country.

Artists participating in the FAP were afforded considerable independence, with many favoring realistic depictions of workers in mills and factories across the U.S., as well as American scenery and historical subjects. Such pragmatic art forms gained momentum as they became more accessible to the common people, who identified with and recognized themselves (or their plight) depicted.

*Coming of Age: The WPA/FAP Graphic Arts Division and the American Print* is the fourth annual collaboration between the NIU Art Museum and students enrolled in ART 656, Museum Exhibitions and Interpretation. ART 656 is a graduate level Museum Studies course taught by WPA scholar and Museum Studies Coordinator, Peter Van Ael.

The NIU Art Museum is located on the first floor, west end of Altgeld Hall, the “castle,” at the northwest corner of College and Castle on the NIU campus in DeKalb. The galleries are open to the public Tuesday – Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday 12 noon to 4 p.m., and by appointment for group tours. Exhibitions and programs are free unless otherwise noted; donations are appreciated. Pay parking is available in the Visitor’s Lot on Carroll Avenue and at metered spots in front of Altgeld Hall. Free parking is available on Saturdays and during receptions and for visiting artist lectures in the lot northeast of Gilbert and College Drives.

- - - More - - -
The exhibitions of the NIU Art Museum are funded in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, the Friends of the NIU Art Museum, and the Arts Fund 21. Support for the New Deal Era projects has also come from 3M Foundation, the DeKalb County Community Foundation, John and Nancy Castle, Veolia Transportation, Panera Bread, the University Honors Program and the Illinois Humanities Council.

Additional programs are listed on our website: www.niu.edu/artmuseum or call 815.753.1936.