Exhibitions, Catalogues & Books

Hobos to Street People: Artists’ Responses to Homelessness from the New Deal to the Present continues at the California Historical Society, San Francisco, until August 15. Organized by the California Exhibit Resources Alliance and curated by Art Hazelwood advised by Charles Wollenberg on historical matters and Paul Boden on contemporary issues, the exhibition travels through 2011.

Marking the 75th anniversary of the New Deal in 2008, when the U.S. government responded to the devastating impact of the Great Depression by creating powerful programs to assist those in poverty, Hobos to Street People compares artistic interpretations of homelessness. From the Dust Bowl migrants of the 1930s to the stigmatized street people of today, artists have shown different aspects of poverty and homelessness. WPA artists portrayed the lives of the poorest Americans both in “noble” and negative images. The work of artists such as Dorothea Lange often appeared in popular magazines such as Life and Time, profoundly influencing attitudes towards poverty. From World War II through the 1980s, artists tended to portray the homeless as degenerates unworthy of the government’s interest. Contemporary California artists, however, are documenting and commenting on today’s poverty in ways more akin to artists of the Depression era. The artists of the 42 original works in the exhibition bring a wide range of cultural viewpoints and historical perspectives on the topic, including Dorothea Lange, Rockwell Kent, Francisco Dominguez, Sandow Birk, Art Hazelwood and the San Francisco Print Collective.

Evolution: Five Decades of Printmaking by David C. Driskell will be on display at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, until August 2. Driskell — artist, art historian, collector, educator — has made invaluable contributions to scholarship in the history of art and the role of the African American artist in American society; in 2000, he was awarded the National Humanities Medal from President Clinton. Evolution features 75 prints that provide insight into Driskell’s artistic process and development as well as the influence of African art on American modernism. Organized by the David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora at the University of Maryland, College Park, as the inaugural exhibition at the Driskell Center’s new gallery, the next venue will be the Portland Museum of Art, Maine, October 27, 2009 to January 17, 2010.