

Rollins
Museum
of Art

Studio Saturdays: Travel Scrapbooks



AT THE CIRCUS

Museum purchase from the Michel Roux Acquisition Fund, 2013.20
© Margaret Bourke-White/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

At the Circus Margaret Bourke-White (American, 1904-1971)

1931

Photogravure Print

16 x 20 in.

MATERIALS

1 Sheet of Paper
Scissors

Colored Pencils or Markers
Stickers, tickets, pictures from
your travels or things from the
place you'd like to visit

Margaret Bourke-White was an American photographer born in the Bronx in New York in 1904. In 1927, when she was 23 years old, Bourke-White graduated from Cornell University where she had studied art photography. In 1929, she accepted a position at Fortune magazine in New York, and in 1930 she left to the Soviet Union to take photographs documenting the first Soviet Five Year Plan. The **Soviet Union** was a group of countries that included Russia and smaller countries next to Russia like Poland and Hungary. The **Five Year Plan** was a plan the Soviet Union's government put in place to grow the industry in the Union. They did this by building a large number of factories, and focused these factories on making machines for war and for farming.

Margaret Bourke-White was the first Western photographer allowed to come into the Soviet Union. "Western" here means someone from western Europe or North America. She travelled to the Soviet Union during the summers from 1930-1932. During her first trip, Bourke-White focused on the machines in the mines and factories, but as she travelled through the different countries, she became more interested in the people who lived there. Many people in the Soviet Union became very poor because of the effects of the Five Year Plan, and Bourke-White saw similarities between the working people suffering there and the working people living in poverty back in the United States during the 1930s. She turned the focus of her photographs to documenting the daily lives of people in the Soviet Union; for example, this photograph, titled *At the Circus*, shows a group of regular people in the audience at a circus, smiling and watching the performances.

Bourke first published her photographs in Fortune Magazine with the title "Eyes on Russia", and then published a whole book of her Soviet Union photographs under the same title. Her book not only served as a record of her travels there, but also allowed people in the United States to see what life in the Soviet Union was really like for people like them.

Just as Margaret Bourke-White wrote articles and books about her travels, today we'll be making our own travel scrapbook with photographs, keepsakes, and our written memories. Think about a place you have traveled to, or would like to travel to, and gather together materials that relate to that trip you went on or the place you want to go to. We'll be creating a small book together to hold those materials together, creating our own record of travel just like Bourke-White.

THINK LIKE AN ARTIST

1. Margaret Bourke-White created her book of photographs in a time when most people couldn't travel to different countries or easily learn about them. How do you think photographs like hers affected how people thought of other people and cultures in faraway places?
2. If you could travel to a fictional place and document it like Bourke-White, where would you want to go?

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Take a sheet of paper and fold it in half hamburger style, making a horizontal line across the middle.
- 2) Now, fold it in half again the same way, creating another horizontal line.
- 3) Open your paper back up and fold it in half hotdog style this time, making a vertical line across the middle. Now open it back up, and you should have eight separate sections. If they're hard to see, you can use a pencil to follow the creases and make the sections more clear.
- 4) Use your scissors to cut along the vertical line between the middle four sections.
- 5) Now fold your paper in half hotdog style again, and fold the middle sections on both sides out to create a diamond shape. Fold the two sections fully in half and close the four-part shape in on itself to create a book.
- 6) Now that your book is made, you can fill it with your scrapbooking materials. Your book can be inspired by a real or fictional place.