

UIMA-organized exhibit at Figge covers 500 years of Western printmaking

Written by Dan McNeil

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IMAGE: Cornelis Galle the Elder (Flemish; Antwerp, 1576-1650), Procne Showing Tereus the Head of his Child (after Peter Paul Rubens, Flemish; Antwerp, 1577-1640), c. 1637, Engraving, Museum purchase 1980.92

The University of Iowa Museum of Art's (UIMA) second exhibition presented at Davenport's Figge Art Museum, "In the Footsteps of Masters: The Evolution of the Reproductive Print," opens Jan. 21 and will remain on view through May 23. The exhibition is curated by UI student Nathan Popp, a UIMA curatorial graduate assistant who organized the exhibit to examine the role of printmaking in the development of visual culture.



The exhibition spans 500 years, featuring nearly 80 Western reproductive prints from the 15th to the 20th century. Featured in the exhibition are original prints and drawings by artists Albrecht

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Dürer, Annibale Carracci, Jusepe De Ribera, Edouard Manet, Jean-Baptiste Corot, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, William Blake, Francisco Goya, and Grant Wood, as well as reproductive prints made after the works of famous masters such as Raphael, Peter Paul Rubens, Rembrandt, Jan Vermeer, Jan Van Eyck, Titian, Michelangelo and others.

Admission to the Figge Art Museum, located at 225 West Second St., Davenport, is free for UI faculty, staff, and students with their UI ID cards and for UIMA donors with their Donor Courtesy Cards.

"In the Footsteps of Masters" traces an important component of the history of Western printmaking: the usage and development of reproductive prints. "In this exhibition, I wanted to tell the stories of how Western reproductive printmaking started and how it changed over time," said Popp, whose hometown is Belmont, Wis.

Before the invention of photography, prints made with techniques such as engraving, woodcut, and etching were created after notable works in other media. With the advantage of being mass-produced, reproductive prints allowed artists to widely distribute their work, which could build the reputation of a famous master artist or a legendary work of art. As the artistic status of printmakers grew, many began incorporating their own expressive elements rather than creating strict copies of the original works. This advancement caused new printmaking techniques to develop.

Popp realized the UIMA had not presented an exhibition addressing this area of printmaking history and that a number of UIMA works in this category had never before been exhibited. On UIMA Chief Curator Kathy Edwards' advice and with her continued support, Popp pursued the topic, a project that took three years to complete.

"This experience has led Nathan to expand his knowledge of print history to such a degree that he has pursued the topic in his studies separate from his employment at the museum," Edwards said. Popp received scholarly recognition for his paper related to the exhibition, "An Equation for Conflict: Micromanaging Creativity in Rubens' Printmaking Workshop." He was selected to discuss his paper through various presentations around the country in spring 2009, including the Midwest Art History Society's annual conference in April. "We are all very proud of him," Edwards said.

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Although Popp originally anticipated utilizing the UIMA's former Riverside Drive building for the exhibition, the UIMA's partnership with the Figge following the 2008 flood offered a larger gallery space, which allowed him to display additional works lent by collectors Alden Lowell Doud, John and Trish Koza, and G. Ron Kastner.

"This could not have been possible without the generosity of our friends and donors," Popp said. "The 2008 flood had a drastic impact on the Museum, but it has not slowed our work. The support from the Figge and these wonderful collectors has been instrumental in keeping the project on track. I'm sincerely grateful for their participation and I am continuously inspired by the sense of community, which has made my exhibition a reality."

"In the Footsteps of Masters: The Evolution of the Reproductive Print" is sponsored by MidWestOne Bank and by an anonymous donor. To view a slideshow of the exhibit, visit <http://www.flickr.com/photos/iowaart/sets/72157623064940033/show/>

Because of the 2008 flood, the UI Museum of Art offices have been relocated to the Studio Arts Building, 1840 SA, Iowa City, IA 52242, and Museum of Art events and exhibitions are being held at various locations. For up-to-date UIMA information, visit <http://www.uiowa.edu/uima> or call 319-335-1725.

STORY SOURCE: University of Iowa Arts Center Relations, 300 Plaza Centre One, Iowa City, IA 52242-2500