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Elvehjem Museum of Art

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The Elvehjem Museum of Art artscene

University of Wisconsin–Madison
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Three Installations by Xu Bing

On November 30, the Elvehjem Museum of Art will open an exhibition of works by Xu Bing, a controversial leader of the Chinese avant-garde art movement known as the New Wave. The exhibition will be comprised of three installations, *A Book from the Sky*, *The Ghosts Pounding the Wall*, and *Five Series of Repetitions*.

As a graduate student at the Central Academy of Art in Beijing, Xu became interested in exploring the nature of printmaking, a medium in which process is generally taken for granted. *Five Series of Repetitions*, completed at that time, highlights the process of woodblock printing: prints were drawn from the wood block a stage at a time by carving and then recarving the block, as the artist gradually approached the final image.

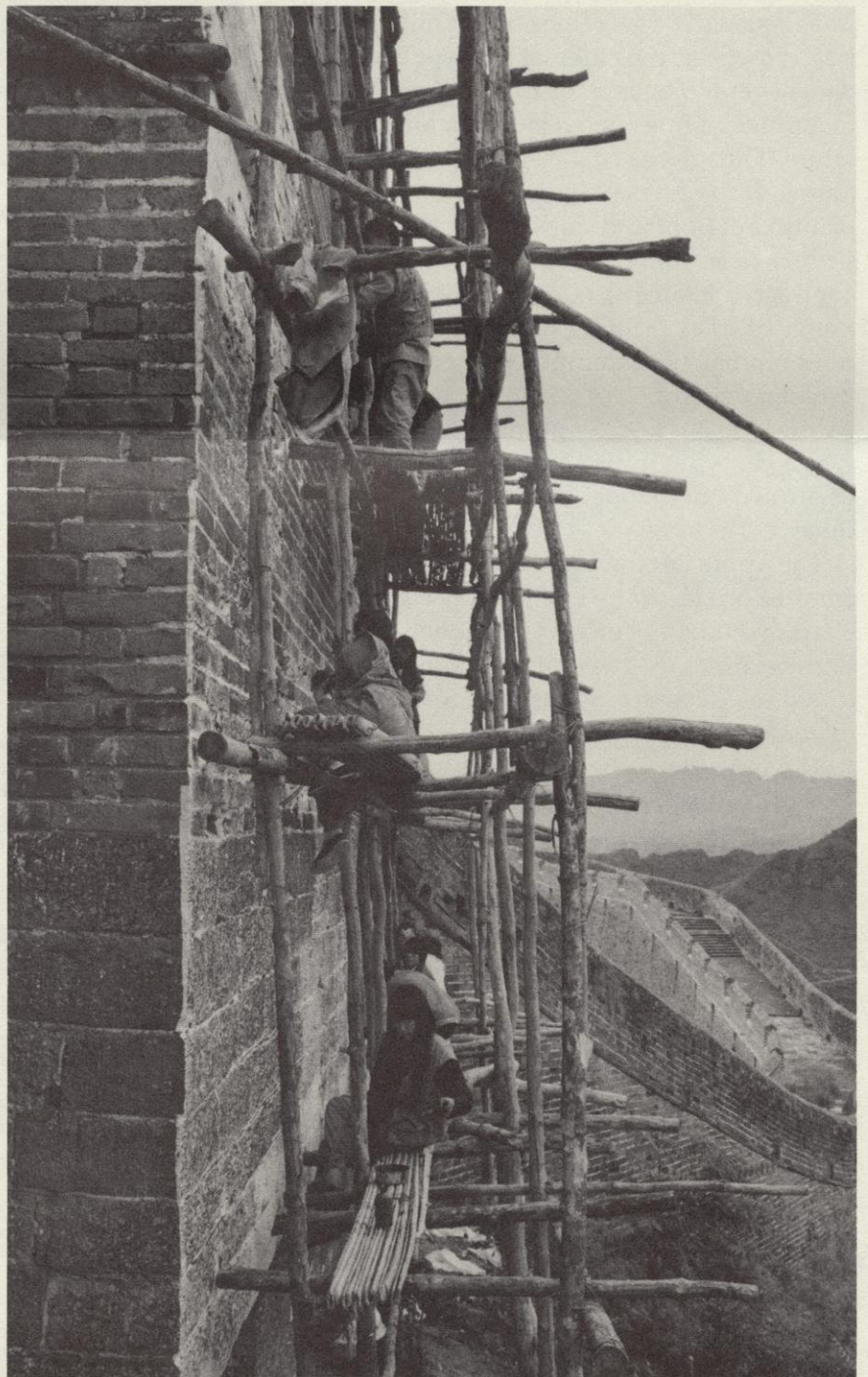
After his appointment as assistant professor at the Central Academy in 1987, Xu Bing devoted his energy to producing *A Book from the Sky*. To this end, he invented more than four-thousand Chinese characters (approximately the number of real characters that are in frequent use in the Chinese language) and carved them into wooden blocks so that they could be typeset, printed, and bound into books, mimicking the process and aesthetics of traditional Chinese books, and yet totally devoid of written meaning.

When displayed in the Fine Arts Museum in Beijing in October, 1988, *A Book from the Sky* caused a sensation. The idea of expending such lengthy and precise effort to create books which on first glance appeared readable but on closer inspection defied all attempts at decipherment overwhelmed the audience. *A Book from the Sky* was hailed as the representative work of the New Wave art movement; the quality of artistic production as well as the concepts behind it earned it this position. In 1989, however, after the Tiananmen Square incident of June 4, publicly voiced acclaim ceased. As the political climate became more conservative, *A Book from the Sky* was denounced for its comments on the futility of human effort and the meaninglessness of culture, and it came to represent all that the government considered bad about the new art. One critic called it "ghosts-pounding-the-wall art," comparing Xu's great expenditure of energy to create a meaningless book to a story about a man who traveled all night without actually going anywhere.

"Ghosts-pounding-the-wall art" became a standard derision, and Xu decided to mock this appellation by picking up a project he had conceived years before: he left the scrutiny of Beijing and spent a month at the Great Wall, taking a rubbing intended to constitute the installation piece which he now entitled *The Ghosts Pounding the Wall*. This piece combines Xu's earlier interest in demonstrating that a print can be taken from almost anything, with the philosophy of the meaninglessness of both human culture and individual effort embodied in *A Book from the Sky*.

The latter philosophy is reflected in the amount of effort exerted in the creation of *The Ghosts Pounding the Wall*, which Xu claims to be an ultimately meaningless work. Xu and a large crew of art students and peasants labored for twenty-four days, from dawn until dusk, to take a rubbing of a section of the Great Wall and one of its towers, consuming three-hundred bottles of ink and thirteen-hundred sheets of paper in the process. The work has continued in a

warehouse in Madison, where Xu and a professional mounter have mounted the rubbings so that they can be suspended from the walls of the central hall of the Elvehjem Museum and draped from the ceiling at one end to the floor at the other. The viewer will be surrounded by the rich darkness of the rubbings, an icon of Chinese culture encapsulated by Xu Bing and represented as exemplifying the futility of that culture and of human effort.



Xu Bing and students make ink rubbings of the Great Wall of China in preparation for the exhibition

The Elvehjem

Beyond Black and White: Chiaroscuro Woodcuts from the Frank Horlbeck Collection

From November 10th through January 12 in Mayer Gallery the Elvehjem will exhibit chiaroscuro woodcuts from the collection of Frank Horlbeck, professor of art history at UW-Madison. The chiaroscuro woodcut has traditionally been used to make unique works of art more widely available, and each of the thirty works selected for the exhibition is one artist's rendition in woodcut of a drawing or painting by another artist. Together they show the development of this woodcut technique in Italy, France, and England from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century.

All woodcuts are made by carving a design into a board of wood, which is then inked and printed onto paper. A simple woodcut uses a single block to print its image, usually black lines onto white paper. However, the chiaroscuro woodcut uses several blocks to print a single image in a range of hues between black and white. Thus in the first application for a patent of the process in Italy it was called printing in light and dark or *a chiaro et scuro*, a description which was eventually contracted to chiaroscuro. Unlike other varieties of color printing, the chiaroscuro does not usually attempt to convey a broad palette of colors. Instead, it builds its image from a small number of hues, the way a drawing might; thus the chiaroscuro woodcut most frequently reproduces a drawing.

The applicant for patent which gave the chiaroscuro its name in 1516 was Ugo da Carpi, who had been commissioned by Parmigianino to create prints after his drawings. This sort of partnership was not uncommon; for instance, Bartolomeo Coriolano often worked from the drawings of Guido Reni (whose powerful *Study of a Giant* appears in the exhibition). However, Parmigianino's drawings were the most commonly turned into chiaroscuros; they were not only reproduced during the artist's lifetime by da Carpi, Antonio da Trento (represented in the exhibition by a print after a drawing of Echo and Narcissus), and others, but were used again two centuries later by Antonio Maria Zanetti as the basis for new chiaroscuro woodcuts, done in much the same style as da Carpi's.

Far from being simple copies of other works of art, the chiaroscuro woodcut requires considerable interpretation by the printmaker; Zanetti, for instance, often

used combinations of pastels which had nothing to do at all with the original colors of the drawings he was interpreting. Although traditionally drawings were used for models, in the middle of the seventeenth century John Baptist Jackson, an Englishman in Italy, found backers to support his project of making chiaroscuros of oil paintings. A younger contemporary of Zanetti, Jackson modified the style of his large woodcuts to suit the style of the painting from which he was working, but he often did not imitate the colors of the painting, preferring instead to heighten his woodcuts with rich embossment.

Jackson was an innovator in the medium of the chiaroscuro. Not only did he undertake larger prints and use paintings instead of drawings for his sources, but his technique of using a high-pressure printing press to provide his prints with their deep

embossment was unheard of before his work; conventional wisdom held that a woodblock would be crushed by the pressure of the press. Jackson's innovations can be seen in the *Marriage at Cana* in this exhibition.

A single work by a contemporary artist working with the chiaroscuro woodcut is included in the exhibition. Ray Gloeckler's print *Hornblower* shows the continued use of the chiaroscuro in this century, though now not to interpret a work by another artist but as an original work. The Horlbeck collection not only includes the print but several proofs which demonstrate how the three blocks come together in the final image; in addition, the Elvehjem is fortunate to have the blocks from which *Hornblower* was printed, so visitors to the exhibition can appreciate the technique of the chiaroscuro as well as learn about its history.



John Baptist Jackson (British, 1701-1780), *Massacre of the Innocents*, after Tintoretto, 1739, chiaroscuro woodcut, 23 x 32 7/8 in. Collection of Frank Horlbeck

Loan of Rare Bronzes and Jade on Display

This fall a special installation of ancient Chinese artifacts fills the niche case adjacent to the Asian Art gallery on the fourth floor. The rare ancient bronze ritual vessels and jade ornaments are on loan from the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, one of the country's premier collections of Oriental arts. The works are being used by UW-Madison art history professor Julia Murray in her Asian art and Chinese art survey courses this semester. The loan affords students and Elvehjem visitors an opportunity to see fine examples of two of the most highly developed forms of artistic expression in ancient China: bronze casting and jade-working. The installation will be on view through January 5.

Starting in the Shang period (ca. 1523-1028 B.C.), utensils made of bronze were used in preparing and offering sacrifices of food and wine to the spirits of the ancestors. The vessels were cast in a variety of shapes by means of clay section molds, in which the designs intended as surface ornament were executed in reverse.

A characteristic motif seen on many bronze vessels is the *taotie*, sometimes referred to as a "glutton" or "ogre" mask. Although varying from one rendition to another, the *taotie* typically has a pair of hypnotic eyes, horns, and jaws presented in symmetrical, frontal perspective. Some bronzes are inscribed with clan emblems or dedications to an ancestor. These examples of ancient Chinese writing were cast along with the decoration instead of being incised into the cold metal.

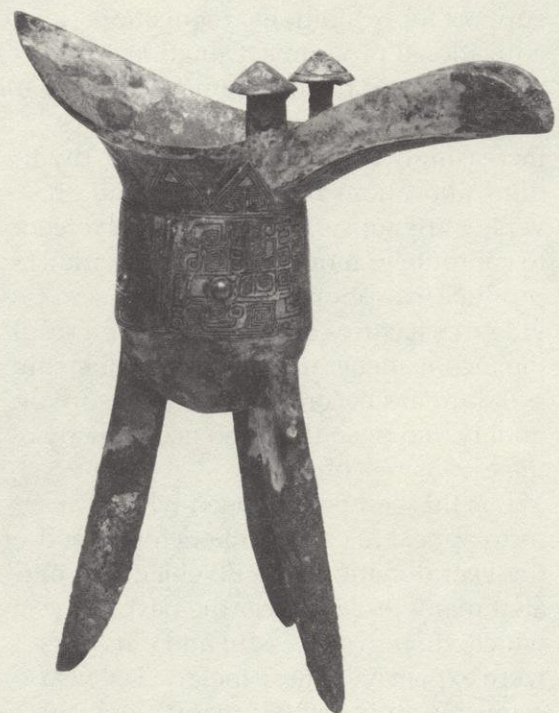
The casting of bronze vessels for ceremonial purposes continued under the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1027-256 B.C.), and the repertory of shapes and decorative techniques continued to develop. During this long period, the treatment of surface decor changed dramatically. In the later centuries of the Zhou period, bronze was also used for personal ornaments, such as the garment hook in the exhibition, an object embellished with the decorative metallic inlays that came into favor at this time.

Jade has been worked in China from the fourth millennium B.C. to the present. As traditionally used, the term "jade" includes a variety of semi-precious hardstones, some of which were native to China, while others were imported over long distances. The colors of jade range widely, depending on the amount and type of mineral impurities in the stone. The examples in this exhibition are subtle shades of green and brown, sometimes variegated. The familiar bright green type, jadeite, did not appear in China until the eighteenth century.

Two of the Shang jades exhibited were personal ornaments, and they have tiny perforations that would allow them to be strung. A pendant in the form of a *taotie* reproduces the motif common on Shang bronzes. Another jade piece in the exhibition is a large and impressive late Zhou disk or *bi* which uses an ancient shape and updates it with relief spiral motifs.



Chinese, Western Zhou dynasty. Food server, or *gui*, 11th century B.C.; bronze, height 9 3/16 in. The Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Gift of Arthur M. Sackler.



Chinese, Shang dynasty. Wine warmer or *jue*, 13th century B.C.; bronze, height 8 3/8 in. The Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Gift of Arthur M. Sackler.

Artschwager and Artful Deception Exhibitions Close November 10

The Elvehjem designed the exhibition *Richard Artschwager: PUBLIC(public)* to provide the new outdoor sculpture, *Generations*, with an art historical and critical context. Articulated into two parts, the exhibition provides a retrospective overview of the artist's work from 1962 to the present day and Artschwager's outdoor sculpture, which has been part of his repertory only since 1987. The retrospective exhibition, curated by the artist himself, includes excellent examples of his sculptures made of sleek synthetic materials such as Formica which echo his origins as a furniture maker. Also included are his paintings in acrylic on roughly textured Celotex, depicting architectural interiors, blown-up buildings, and closeups of textiles. The second part of the exhibition presents models and drawings from the artist's own collection which have never before been exhibited or published. The completed pieces are portrayed in the exhibition in dramatically backlit color transparencies.

Artful Deception: The Craft of the Forger addresses issues that museums rarely make public, the problems of detecting and exposing art forgeries. Organized by the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, the show has enjoyed extraordinary popularity, both because of its unusual focus, and

because of its engaging pedagogical method. The exhibition is designed to let viewers judge, through visual clues, which objects are and which are not fake.

The exhibition includes two dozen spurious artifacts, chosen by the curators and conservation specialists for the fascinating stories they tell about the forger's craft and the methods that experts employ to scrutinize works of art. Museum founder Henry Walters, rather than hiding his occasional acquisition mistakes, boldly exhibited them and challenged visiting collectors and dealers to identify their revealing flaws. This exhibition is thus mounted by the Walters Art Gallery in the spirit of public discourse that Walters found essential to maintaining the highest standards for collecting.

Visitors to *Artful Deception* are invited to distinguish authentic works from spurious ones: a dubious "Roman" portrait head from a similar, uncontested example; two gilt and enamel clocks, both attributed to the Sevres porcelain manufactory, but one a late eighteenth century Sevres masterpiece and the other a nineteenth century imitation. The exhibition helps to demystify the complexities of connoisseurship and introduces the layman to methods that museum professionals use to identify a forger's tricks.

Membership Has Its Privileges

The Elvehjem’s members provide essential support for exhibitions, acquisitions, and educational programs. Donations from members help the museum maintain a full calendar of activities. In these years of increasingly scaled-down budgets, dwindling allocations from the state and university are not sufficient for the Elvehjem to continue to mount superb exhibitions, produce exceptional publications, and provide free lectures and concerts. As a result, the income generated by the membership program has become crucial to ensure the quality and even the existence of many of the Elvehjem’s offerings.

It is this compelling need which causes us to appeal to our members for an end-of-the-year donation. The Elvehjem has initiated many projects over the past few years which, though successful and effective, were expensive. These include last year’s extensive and essential renovations, the new audio tour of the collection, the organization of the traveling exhibition *Art in Switzerland*, and the commission of Richard Artschwager’s outdoor sculpture *Generations*. As we look back at such activities, we appreciate the generosity of the donors and members that made them possible. It is our hope that as 1991 concludes, you will also assess the Elvehjem’s past successes and realize the importance of your support in its future endeavors. We will be

grateful for a donation of any size in the interest of continuing a tradition of excellence. Please send year-end gifts to the museum at the address listed below.

When you consider supporting the museum, please remember that our collection is enhanced both by donations which permit us to purchase art and by direct donations of works of art. If you are considering donating a work of art, members of our staff or of the University of Wisconsin Foundation staff will be delighted to discuss with you how this may be accomplished to benefit both giver and receiver.

We are most grateful to our members who continue to support the museum and its programs year after year, but we are also eager to attract new members. Readers who are not yet members may complete the membership form below and return it to the Elvehjem Museum of Art, 800 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53706. We encourage members to pass on this newsletter to friends and neighbors who do not at present support the Elvehjem, especially people who are new to the community. You may also call the membership office (608/263-2495) to give us names and addresses of people who might be interested in information about the museum, and we will mail brochures and newsletters to them.

Museum Shop Expands for Holidays

The Museum Shop’s annex in the Whyte Gallery at the north entrance opens November 1 for the winter holidays. New items this year are “Dream Nets,” crafted from ash or willow and sinew by the Ojibwe tribe of Minnesota. Dream nets were traditionally hung above a cradle in order to entangle the bad dreams, which then perished at the break of dawn; only the good dreams would find their way through the center of the net to the sleeping child (\$8.00–\$14.00). Also available for the first time are architectural ornaments made in Vermont of native maple (\$6.00–\$14.00).

As always the shop stocks an extensive selection of holiday greeting cards featuring artworks from the Renaissance through the Impressionists. Advent calendars, engagement and wall calendars for 1992, unusual jewelry, books, and games make thoughtful gifts. The holiday shop annex will be open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Sunday through Saturday through the holidays. Shopping early provides the most complete selection.

JOIN THE ELVEHJEM

Membership enables you to become an integral and essential part of the Elvehjem.

Annual Benefits include:

- Invitations to openings, receptions and special events
- A subscription to *Artscene* for advance notice of exhibitions, education and membership programs, and special events
- 15% discount on Museum Shop purchases
- The Bulletin/Annual Report

As a member you support:

- Acquisitions
- Exhibitions
- Publications
- Educational Programs
- Special Events and Programs

Yes, I want to become a member of the Elvehjem Museum of Art.

(If you are already a member, please pass this form on to someone you know who would like to join the Elvehjem.)

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Address _____

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☐ Please find my check enclosed for \$ _____

☐ Charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Card # _____

Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

☐ Please contact me about becoming an Elvehjem volunteer.

Please return this form with your check payable to the:
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Membership Office
800 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53706

Membership Categories

☐ Fellow \$1,000

☐ Associate \$250

☐ Founder \$100

☐ Family \$45

☐ Individual \$30

☐ Special \$20

☐ Senior citizen (age 62 and over)

☐ Full-time student

My additional gift for programming is \$ _____

Thank You for Your Support!

CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

1 Friday

Holiday Shop opens in Whyte Gallery at north entrance across from the Museum Shop. Hours are 9:00–5:00 daily

3 Sunday

Elvehjem docent Marian Thompson gives 40-minute tour of temporary exhibitions *Richard Artschwager: PUBLIC(public)*, *Visions and Revisions: Robert Cumming's Works on Paper*, and *Artful Deception: The Craft of the Forger* 1:30 p.m., Paige Court

3 Sunday

Sunday Afternoon Live features the Wisconsin Arts Quintet. 2:30 p.m., Brittingham Gallery III

3 Sunday

Visions and Revisions: Robert Cumming's Works on Paper in Mayer Gallery closes

5 Tuesday

Panel discussion on “Issues of Authenticity,” featuring Professor Noël Carroll (philosophy department) on forgery in painting, Professor John A. Kidwell (law school) on originality and the law, Professor Robert Sack (geography department) on authenticity of place, and Anton Rajer (art conservator, Wisconsin State Capitol restoration project) on authenticity and conservation, 7:30 p.m., room 140

7 Thursday

Elvehjem Docent Ann Sauthoff will give a 40-minute collections overview tour, 12:20 p.m., Paige Court

9 Saturday

Beyond Black and White: Chiaroscuro Woodcuts from the Frank Horlbeck Collection opens in Mayer Gallery and will be on view through Sunday, January 12

10 Sunday

Elvehjem docent Zora Dunn gives 40-minute tour of temporary exhibitions *Richard Artschwager: PUBLIC(public)* and *Artful Deception: The Craft of the Forger*, 1:30 p.m., Paige Court

10 Sunday

Sunday Afternoon Live features the Lawrence Conservatory Faculty Concert. 2:30 p.m., Brittingham Gallery III

10 Sunday

Richard Artschwager: PUBLIC(public) in Galleries VII and VIII closes

10 Sunday

Artful Deception: The Craft of the Forger in Gallery V closes

13 Wednesday

In-service workshop for Madison Metropolitan School District teachers, 4:00–5:30 p.m. Preregistration required, call 266-6181

13 Wednesday

Tandem Press/Department of Art Visiting Artist Lecture: Still-life painter Janet Fish, room 140, 5:30–7:00 p.m.

14 Thursday

Elvehjem Docent Beverly Calhoun will give a 40-minute collections overview tour, 12:20 p.m., Paige Court

14 Thursday

Andrew Stevens, curator of prints and drawings, lectures on “Beyond Black and White: A History of the Chiaroscuro Print,” 4:00 p.m., room 140

17 Sunday

Elvehjem docent Nancy Webster gives 40-minute tour of *Beyond Black and White: Chiaroscuro Woodcuts*, 1:30 p.m., Paige Court

17 Sunday

Sunday Afternoon Live features Norman Paulu, violin, playing works by J. S. Bach. 2:30 p.m., Brittingham Gallery III

21 Thursday

Elvehjem Docent Bea Lindberg will give a 40-minute collections overview tour, 12:20 p.m., Paige Court

24 Sunday

Elvehjem docent Bea Lindberg gives 40-minute tour of *Beyond Black and White: Chiaroscuro Woodcuts*, 1:30 p.m., Paige Court

24 Sunday

Sunday Afternoon Live features Catherine Kautsky, piano. 2:30 p.m., Brittingham Gallery III

28 Thursday

Museum closed for Thanksgiving

30 Saturday

Three Installations by Xu Bing: The Ghosts Pounding the Wall, A Book from the Sky, and Five Series of Repetitions opens in Gallery VII, VIII, and Paige Court and will remain on view through Sunday, January 19

DECEMBER

1 Sunday

Elvehjem docent Karen Zilavy gives 40-minute tour of *Three Installations by Xu Bing and Beyond Black and White: Chiaroscuro Woodcuts*, 1:30 p.m., Paige Court

1 Sunday

Sunday Afternoon Live features the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra Horn Quartet. 2:30 p.m., Brittingham Gallery III

5 Thursday

Elvehjem Docent Friedemarie Farrar will give a 40-minute collections overview tour, 12:20 p.m., Paige Court

6 Friday

Open gallery night for members and public to view installations by Xu Bing, 6:00–8:00 p.m. Docents will be available to give tours

8 Sunday

Elvehjem docent Bea Lindberg gives 40-minute tour of *Three Installations by Xu Bing and Beyond Black and White: Chiaroscuro Woodcuts*, 1:30 p.m., Paige Court

8 Sunday

Sunday Afternoon Live features the Pro Arte String Quartet with James Smith, clarinet, playing music of Mozart in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of his death. 2:30 p.m., Brittingham Gallery III

12 Thursday

Elvehjem Docent Jane Pizer will give a 40-minute collections overview tour, 12:20 p.m., Paige Court

15 Sunday

Elvehjem docent Beverly Calhoun gives 40-minute tour of *Three Installations by Xu Bing and Beyond Black and White: Chiaroscuro Woodcuts*, 1:30 p.m., Paige Court

15 Sunday

Sunday Afternoon Live features Bellamy Hosler on the fortepiano. 2:30 p.m., Brittingham Gallery III

19 Thursday

Elvehjem Docent Sybil Robinson will give a 40-minute collections overview tour, 12:20 p.m., Paige Court

22 Sunday

Elvehjem docent Ellen Lewis gives 40-minute tour of *Three Installations by Xu Bing and Beyond Black and White: Chiaroscuro Woodcuts*, 1:30 p.m., Paige Court

22 Sunday

No Sunday Afternoon Live Concert

24 Tuesday

Museum closed for Christmas Eve

25 Wednesday

Museum closed for Christmas

26 Thursday

Elvehjem Docent will give a 40-minute collections overview tour, 12:20 p.m., Paige Court

29 Sunday

Elvehjem docent gives 40-minute tour of *Three Installations by Xu Bing and Beyond Black and White: Chiaroscuro Woodcuts*, 1:30 p.m., Paige Court

29 Sunday

No Sunday Afternoon Live Concert

JANUARY

1 Wednesday

Museum closed for New Year's Day

5 Sunday

Sunday Afternoon Live features Uwharrie Clarinet-Per-cussion Duo. 2:30 p.m. Brittingham Gallery III

Curatorial Musings

Andrew Stevens, Assistant Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

It is my frequent pleasure to explain the changing print exhibitions to docents, the volunteers who in turn will provide tours of the exhibitions to groups of the general public. The docents are a lively and involved audience, so I often gain a new perspective on the works from them.

A case in point occurred last year when I was talking about the reopening exhibition of western prints and drawings. I had come to a print by Jan van de Velde, *The Dance of the Mardi Gras*, which depicts a scene outside a well-to-do Dutch home of the seventeenth century. A crowd has gathered on both sides of the front door; those inside and out watch two dancing children, decked out with bells, one of them wearing a bandolier of sausages. At this point a docent, Friedemarie Farrar, commented that this custom was still practiced during her childhood in Westphalia. Children would go from house to house during *fasching*, singing “we have heard that you have just slaughtered” a pig and would go on to ask for a sausage “and not a small one.” It was fascinating to learn that this sort of festivity, so often depicted in seventeenth-century Dutch prints, had held on into this century.

The sausage bandolier points to a very similar tradition in the Netherlands, as does the Latin inscription, which means something like “Why do the poor beggars sing and play—because their bellies are empty.” Why is the inscription in Latin rather than Dutch? Some have suggested that it gives a scholarly gloss on an otherwise rustic subject, but it may be that Latin, the lingua franca of Europe, was used because the tradition was common across several countries and languages.

I was also interested in the instruments played by the grownups of the group. The woman in the center plays a *Rommelpot*, a ceramic bowl with a pig bladder stretched across the top. A reed drawn in and out of a hole in the pig bladder makes a pitchless rumble. Another pig-bladder instrument, a beggar’s fiddle held by the man with his back to the viewer, projects above the group like a balloon. The pig bladder is inflated and attached to a stick, and a cord strung the length of the stick over the bladder acts as a sound-box. The plucked cord produces an unmellifluous thunk. Pig-bladder instruments seem appropriate to a tradition concerning sausages, and moreover would have been most available at this time of year when slaughtering was done.



Jan van de Velde (Dutch, 1593-1641), *Dance of the Mardi Gras*, etching, engraving, 7 7/8 x 6 5/8 in. Elvehjem Endowment Fund purchase, 1989.17

We might also note the other objects thrust through the belt of the fiddler: a long-handled implement and a flat pan. They look almost armorial, crossed as they are, and they would be appropriate in a coat-of-arms for Mardi Gras. The flat pan is usually seen in Dutch art in two uses, one to catch the blood of the butchered hog, which could then have been used to make blood-sausage, or as a pan for cooking pancakes, a food of times of festivities, as we see in prints by van de Velde and Rembrandt. In both instances it is used in times of plenty, presaging the leaner times of Lent.

The long-handled device crossing the pan is probably a set of tongs, which are often depicted as a noisemaker like the *Rommelpot* and the beggar’s fiddle, usually

with someone strumming it as like a guitar. It might not be tongs but a waffle-iron. The waffle, like the pancake, was a festive food; we see, for instance, a child in a Brueghel painting crowned king for a day wearing a paper crown and munching on a waffle. The waffle also carried connotations of Lent, its cross-covered surface being reminiscent of the scorings on the host.

The overall implications of the print are of the plenty of Dutch society at a time when it was one of the great trading countries; despite the Latin inscription, the beggars’ bellies do not appear to be empty. Though the darkness of the scene and the last light in the west would give the thoughtful viewer pause, just as a lull in the din of carnival might, that a leaner season is close at hand.

The Elvehjem

EDUCATION

Visual Elements of Art: Tools for Looking

Many people like to visit museums on their own, without the aid of a guide or taped tour, but do not know where to start or what to look for in the pictures. They need guideposts for analyzing the gallery organization and the works of art in the galleries. A visitor does not have to be an artist or an art historian to enjoy museums, but does need some clues about how to approach the works.

The key to analyzing works of art is understanding that each artwork is composed of basic visual elements: line, shape, mass, value, texture, and color. They are the building blocks that artists employ in different and endlessly creative combinations in composition. Groups of these elements work together in every work of art. A visitor may “read” form and composition in any painting by thinking of these elements as a visual grammar. With practice a visitor can dissect and appreciate formal choices the artist made while creating the artwork.

Analyzing the visual elements of art becomes easier if the visitor picks a pair of artworks with a common subject or medium and compares and contrasts their visual elements. By looking at line, shape, etc., in pairs of artworks in every gallery, a viewer can develop a discerning eye. For example, one can compare two landscapes in Gallery V of the Elvehjem. One is *Packhorses: The Midday Rest* (1786) by English artist Thomas Gainsborough. The other is *Scene at Fleury, France* (1893) by the American painter Walter Griffin. The subject matter is very similar; both painters featured workhorses slightly left of center in the picture. Both artists use line in obvious ways (the top of a wall) and subtle ways as the underlying structure of the picture.

Gainsborough and Griffin used line to get the viewer’s eyes channeled into the picture by forming a directional and literal “path” into the composition; a diagonal line starting in the lower left-hand corner which moves to the middle right edge of both paintings is a common linear device for defining the foreground in landscapes. To frame the activity in the center of his canvas Gainsborough painted three vertical lines in the form of a tree trunk and house with chimney (a more discreet, skeletal use of line) on the left and a tiny tree on the right. Griffin stressed horizontal lines in the far edge of the pool and rim of rushes and amplified them with two parallel walls leading to low horizontal farm buildings in the distance. As a result, Gainsborough’s composition appears to have more motion and activity, because horizontal and vertical lines intersect at right angles. By contrast, Griffin’s compo-



Thomas Gainsborough (English, 1727-1787), *Packhorses: The Midday Rest*, 1786, oil on canvas 22 1/4 x 28 1/4 in. Thomas E. Brittingham Fund purchase, 71.15



Walter Griffin (American, 1861-1935), *Scene at Fleury, France*, 1893, oil on canvas, 44 1/2 x 73 3/4 in. Thomas E. Brittingham Fund and Elvehjem Endowment Fund purchase, 1979.77

sition seems more static and calm because it is dominated by horizontal lines.

Some lines form shapes, such as the contour of a pond or the outline of a horse. Lines and shapes may also form masses or volumes, the horses or clusters of trees in these two examples. Value, light and dark, in a picture modulates the colors and sets a mood. Grayed tones and brown dominate *Packhorses*; white mixed with combinations of primary colors (blue, red, and yellow) create a uniform brightness in *Scene at*

Fleury. Gainsborough created swirling texture with smooth, sweeping brush strokes; Griffin dabbed thicker paint and preserved the edge and tactile quality of each stroke to form surface texture.

Without reading one word of art history and by applying a comparison of visual elements, the viewer may come to the conclusion that one artist created shaggy nature almost out of control, the other a crisp, factual nature, formed and dominated by sunlight.

The Elvehjem

Exhibition Enhancement: Panel, Lectures, Audio Tour

Panel Discussion: Issues of Authenticity

To close *Artful Deception: The Craft of the Forger* the Elvehjem asked University of Wisconsin-Madison faculty members from different departments and an art conservator to form a panel to discuss authenticity and its relevance to their disciplines.

Noël Carroll, professor of philosophy, will address the question of whether a forged painting is more or less a substantial work of art than the authentic painting. One point of view of art is that significant form, not authorship is important. Carroll will discuss arguments on both sides of this issue.

John A. Kidwell, professor of law, will discuss the legal definition of "originality," and its major role in copyright law. Using examples from literary and fine arts, Professor Kidwell will consider some derivative works which, though original, borrow a great deal from prior works and which produce some unexpected legal consequences.

Robert Sack, professor of geography, will speak about authenticity of place as it relates to the landscape. To create an authentic wilderness people intend to preserve nature, but in doing so they make adjustments which alter its natural state. Finally, he will explore what *is* authentic in the landscape.

Tony Rajer, art conservator at the Wisconsin State Capitol restoration project, will speak about the effect of conservation on the artistic and historic dimension of cultural objects and issues in conservation ethics, including the degree to which conservators restore artworks in their care.

The panel discussion will take place Tuesday, November 5 at 7:30 p.m. in room 140 of the Elvehjem.

Audio Tour of Installations by Xu Bing

In addition to Britta Erickson's text panels about *Three Installations by Xu Bing*, the Elvehjem will produce an audio tour to aid visitors to *The Ghosts Pounding the Wall*, *A Book from the Sky*, and *Five Series of Repeti-*

tions. Ching-jung Ho, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison taking the Elvehjem's "Museum Training and Connoisseurship" class, will write the audio script to guide adult visitors through the installations. She will incorporate background on traditional Chinese art and culture and its relation to the work of this innovative contemporary artist.

Mayer Gallery Exhibition Lecture

In conjunction with *Beyond Black and White: Chiaroscuro Prints from the Frank Horlbeck Collection* Andrew Stevens, curator of prints and drawings, will present a slide lecture, "Beyond Black and White: A History of the Chiaroscuro Print," on Thursday, November 14 at 4:00 p.m. in room 140. Addressing both their historic and technical developments, he will trace these prints from their beginnings in early sixteenth-century Europe to the late eighteenth century and will illustrate his remarks with Italian and northern European examples.

Elvehjem Museum of Art
800 University Avenue
Madison, Wisconsin 53706-1479



Gallery Hours:

Sunday-Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Museum Shop Hours:

Sunday-Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Closed Thanksgiving Day,

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and
New Year's Day

Kohler Art Library Hours:

Monday-Thursday 8 a.m.-9:45 p.m.

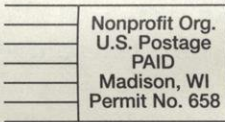
Friday 8 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

Saturday-Sunday 1-4:45 p.m.

For library hours during UW-Madison
holiday periods call (608) 263-2258

Information: (608) 263-2246

Admission is free



artscene

November/December 1991

Important Dated Information!