

Jan Tichy (Czech, b. 1974)

On the Decomposition of a Plane, Type 1-14, 2016

Acrylic on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Richard Gray Gallery

All of these prints are inspired by tiling patterns, also called tessellations, that are produced by irregular pentagons that can be fit together on a flat surface without overlapping or gaps. Something of a mathematical curiosity, there are currently fifteen such pentagons (the most recent having been discovered just last year) with the possibility that still more will emerge over time. The tessellations are further enhanced by Tichy's use of a multi-layered silk screening technique using shades of pure black gradating to pure white, corresponding to the American photographer, Ansel Adams' Zone System, which established eleven 'stops' of perceptible hues. Tichy's silkscreens underscore the illusion of three dimensions implicit in the very form of the tessellated pentagons through a similar gradation of hues. The velvety effects of dramatic chiaroscuro (modeling through gradations of light to dark) in Adams' gelatin silver prints are the photographic equivalent of the spatial illusionism generated by the incised lines of Dürer's woodblock prints.

While some of the tessellations result in tightly ordered patterns – some more compacted, some more undulating – several of the prints are actually the result of chance. Instead of carefully overlapping successive silkscreens in different shades of black, gray, and sometimes white, Tichy breaks the form by allowing the screens to misalign. The representational pull of systematic order is thus ruptured by unique impressions. The suite of prints can be construed as an allegory, then, not only of artistic tradition through repetition and control (the mathematically and geometrically predetermined), but also of the value of chance in artistic creation. In the context of this installation, they also stand for the social systems that produce institutions like the fine art museum, which is at once an ordered collection of works of art as well as an accidental collage; the product of chance encounters of donors, artists, and the community. In their monochromatic elegance, the prints are evocative of the same impulses to order and chaos so indelibly rendered in Dürer's apocalyptic woodcut. They represent the ideal of mathematical and geometrical perfection as a distillation of spiritual transcendence, a constant thematic of the Western tradition of art since the Renaissance. Whether in the expression of divine inspiration or sublime terror, art emerges from the light or from the dark, using the same principles of gradations of light to shadow.

Janiform Herm (Satyrs)

Roman, 1st c. CE

Marble

Bequest of Wright S. Ludington, 1993.1.105

A herm was originally a pillar-like sculptural representation of Hermes, messenger god of antiquity, who functioned as a form of protection at entrances to homes, sanctuaries, and other types of buildings. In this example, there are two aspects represented, front to back, making it a janiform or double herm. On one side is a youthful satyr with a pine wreath on his head, while on the other is an aging satyr with grape vines intertwined in his locks. In the context of this installation, the herm occupies temporarily what would otherwise be felt as a glaring absence – the tall funerary loutrophoros that had graced Ludington Court since its dedication by Wright Ludington to his father for the exhibition of Greek and Roman antiquities, also donated by Ludington when the Museum first opened its doors in 1941. The placement of the herm recalls the actual centrality of the service desk that was at the heart of the original post office, as seen in the vintage photograph below. All of the antiquities have been temporarily removed because of the impending demolition of this space for seismic retrofitting.



Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471-1528)

***The Seven Angels Sounding Trumpets from the Apocalypse*, 1498**

Woodcut on paper

Museum purchase with funds provided by the Women's Board, 1966.26

This woodcut is one of a series of fifteen prints illustrating the Book of Revelation (8:6-13; 11:15-19) which is considered the masterpiece not only of Dürer's career, but of the entire history of the woodcut medium. In a single image, the artist represents the seven calamities that God caused to befall the world (hail and fire, meteors that destroy all sea life and then, freshwater creatures, the darkening of the sun and moon, a plague of locusts to torture humanity, a demonic army that kills a third of all humanity, and finally, the summoning of seven angels with the further seven bowls of God's wrath). The relevant passages in Latin that the woodcut illustrates bleed through from the back of the print, which would have been bound as a page in a book, first published more than five centuries ago.

Acquired by the SBMA Women's Board in 1966, it is one of a handful of old master prints retained in the permanent collection. This image of God's terrible and final judgement, rendered entirely through degrees of shadow and light created by the grooves incised into a block of wood, inked, and then impressed on paper, functions at once as a warning against sinners and as an extraordinary door through which the viewer can access divine inspiration and thus, salvation. Like all fragile works on paper, which are light sensitive, this print normally 'rests' in complete darkness. For the purposes of this special installation, we have chosen to mask the print to shield it from the intensity of sunlight streaming from the skylight of Ludington Court, which is usually mediated by a tarp. While the Museum ensures the image's preservation, it can only do so by severely restricting its visibility. Thus, this print, not only through its subject but through its very fallibility as an image that imperceptibly and inevitably must fade over the course of time, functions as an apt metaphor for the paradoxical nature of the fine art museum and its mission -- to preserve art for posterity -- something which it strives to advance, but all too often, either fails to do (in the face of natural catastrophe) or is forced to contradict as its collecting parameters morph over time.



* To view object please lift blackout sheet with tab.

Label background to match
Benjamin Moore #OC-68 Distant Gray

Oliphant

**Democratic Republic of Congo, Mangbetu Tribe,
19th century**

Ivory

Gift of Mrs. Max Schott (Alice F.), 1945.4.19

Oliphant

Democratic Republic of Congo, 19th century

Ivory

Gift of Baroness von Wiesenberger, 1979.87

These two oliphants (side-blown trumpets or horns) have probably never been put on display since their accession into the permanent collection in 1945 and in 1979, respectively. They remain part of an eclectic array of African objects in the permanent collection, some of which are of indisputable Museum quality. To the Mangbetu people, these types of objects were viewed as symbols of power. The lighter example was probably made specifically for the Western tourist trade and was never played. Both have been recommended for deaccession by specialists. Recently, illegal trafficking in ivory has given rise to an increasingly high-profile campaign to stop the indiscriminate poaching of African and Asian elephants. It is no longer possible to even acquire or sell objects made from ivory other than domestically.

The lighter ivory oliphant was donated to the Museum by one of its original founders, Alice F. Schott. The other was given to the Museum by Baroness Frances von Wiesenberger (1915-2002), another long-time Santa Barbara resident.

Jan Tichy (Czech, b. 1974)

Installation No. 31 (Seven Seas), 2016

Single channel HD video projection, 10 minutes

Courtesy of the artist

The motif used in this projection can be found in the impluvium (an ancient Roman water feature, of which the one centered in Ludington Court is a facsimile). The motif, which is repeated seven times in the image, slowly emerges by degrees in accordance with the 255 steps of grayscale currently utilized in all digital images. The highest notes of reflection are actually the result of sediment that has accumulated from the running water of the fountain over the course of the last seventy-five years. Water, which is the natural enemy of most fine art, is now considered anathema in art museums according to current art conservation best-practice, even though, ironically, the impluvium has been one of the most beloved features of Ludington Court since its inauguration. Its eventual disappearance due to the ongoing renovation of the original 1912 post office is thus literally enacted in Tichy's time-based wall projection. A kind of moving elegy to the design of the court as envisioned by the museum's founder, Wright Ludington, the video is a testament to the past incarnations of what was once a Federal post office, while metaphorically illuminating or masking the social forces that must continue to shape the formation of the Museum's permanent collection and its presentation.

Please note: when entering von Romberg gallery through the curtain, you may experience some disorientation depending on the degree of light emitted by the projector during the run of the video. Please allow your eyes to adjust and be mindful of the large bronze sculpture that is situated to your left.

Ansel Adams (American, 1902–1984)

Winter Sunrise, Sierra Nevada, Lone Pine, 1942

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Margaret Weston, 2005.76.2

Ansel Adams (American, 1902–1984)

Trailside, Near Juneau, Alaska, 1947

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Margaret W. Weston, 2008.73.1

Ansel Adams is considered one of the great master photographers of the last century. Over the course of his long career, Adams devised and perfected the Zone System, a process that made it possible to standardize areas of black, white and gray in a photograph, as illustrated by the schematic below. Although photography is often presumed to be an 'objective' registration of whatever the camera records, it is more often the product of extremely refined manipulation. Dark room techniques like the classic gelatin silver print, register the image through the exposure of chemicals (in this case silver) to light. However, Adams developed techniques to further enhance and edit the image to achieve a perfection of form and gradations of light to dark that we see in both of these examples.

In these two extraordinary visions of nature shot far and near, Adams uses light and dark to create dramatic contrasts and distinct, virtually abstract areas. Somewhat akin to the subject it represents, *Winter Sunrise* becomes visible only sporadically as it would in nature, by the light from the video projection next to it. This photograph was made by Adams when he was engaged in an FSA project to document the Japanese-American internment camps:

While [photographing] at Manzanar [a Japanese-American internment camp] for a fortnight in the winter of 1944, Virginia and I arose very early in the mornings and drove to Lone Pine with hopes of a sunrise photograph of the Sierra. After four days of frustration when the mountains were blanketed with a heavy cloud, I finally encountered a bright, glistening Sunrise . . . I waited, shivering for a shaft of sunlight to flow over the distant trees. A horse grazing in the frosty pasture stood facing away from me with exasperating, stolid persistence. I observed the final shaft of light

approaching. At the last moment the horse turned to show its profile, and I made the exposure. Within a minute the entire area was flooded with sunlight and the natural chiaroscuro was gone.

Tichy's installation helps to recover Adams's desire to see the isolation of the rugged Sierra mountains as a metaphor for social isolation, in this case the paranoid ostracization of the Japanese-Americans during WWII, as well as the sublime inspiration by which to elevate American idealism to overcome such prejudice.



Ansel Adams Zone System

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Pure Black	Near Black slight tonality no detail	Dark Black slight detail in shadows	Very Dark Gray distinct shadow texture is visible	Medium Dark Gray slightly darker black skin, dark foliage, landscape shadows	Middle Gray 18% gray darker tan white skin, lighter black foliage, skin, light shadows	Middle Light Gray average white skin, light stone, shadow areas on snow	Middle Light Gray white skin, concrete or gray asphalt in sunlight	Light Gray pale white skin, wall in sunlight, bright surfaces	Gray/White pale detail in highlights, white paper, snow, white water	Bright White slight detail in highlights, white specular highlights	Pure White no detail light sources, specular highlights

Charles Henry Niehaus (American, 1855-1935)

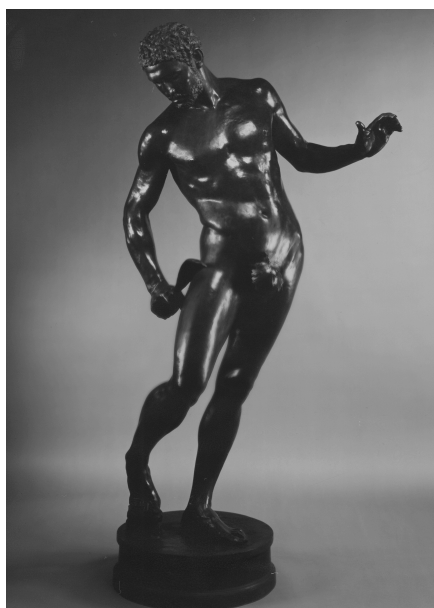
***The Scraper (Greek Athlete Using a Strigil)*, 1883**

Bronze

Museum purchase in honor of Robert Henning, 2007.55

Born in Cincinnati, Niehaus is all but forgotten in the history of art. During his lifetime, he earned critical praise for the unconventional naturalism of his work, which was in part the result of his years of study at the Munich Royal Academy from 1877-1880. The subject of this monumental sculpture is in emulation of a type invented in classical antiquity by the Greek sculptor Lysippos and depicts an athlete in the act of scraping the sweat from his body with a curved piece of metal known as a strigil. Many of the most celebrated sculptures produced by the ancient Greeks are only known through the many copies made after them by the Romans. The originals are lost.

This cast was actually produced specifically at the request of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in whose collection exists a related monumental sculpture of a Greek athlete probably conceived at the same time by Niehaus, and also derived from a type associated with Lysippos. For reasons that are not publicly known, in 1956 the Met decided to exclude the object from its permanent collection (an action called 'deaccession' in museum parlance), just forty-five years after it had paid the artist to produce it. SBMA acquired the sculpture from a private dealer nine years ago, but has not opted to include it for active display since then. It remains shrouded in the Museum's storage vault, where Tichy encountered it one year ago. Since antiquity, bronze has been prized as an expensive medium of indefinite lifespan. Here its silhouette is illuminated only briefly by the video projection, before it is once again plunged into darkness.



Jan Tichy (Czech, b. 1974)

Type 4, 2016

Acrylic on paper

1 of an edition of 7, plus artist's proof

Courtesy of the artist

This is a limited edition print, made by Tichy specifically for the Museum's 75th anniversary gala as an exclusive benefit of the uppermost levels of sponsorship. Similar to the suite of prints on view in Ludington Court, this print is distinguished by the use of a reflective silver, acrylic paint, which, echoes the gelatin silver process used by Ansel Adams in the two photographs on view in von Romberg gallery.

Label background to match
Benjamin Moore #OC-68 Distant Gray