



The Met Celebrates Print Dept Centennial with “The Power of Prints”

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by Hamptons Art Hub Staff

The Metropolitan Museum of Art celebrates the centennial of its Department of Prints with the exhibition “The Power of Prints: The Legacy of William M. Ivins and A. Hyatt Mayor”. Opening on January 26 and running through May 22, 2016, the exhibition pulls from the first 50 years of The Met’s collection to reveal how their American print collection began as well as showcase the impact of the unique perspective of the two men who set the collection on its course.

Pulled from the museum’s extensive holdings, “The Power of Prints” will feature art by Andrea Mantegna, Albrecht Dürer, Marcantonio Raimondi, Jacques Callot, Rembrandt van Rijn, Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, Honoré Daumier, James McNeill Whistler, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Mary Cassatt, Edward Penfield, and Edward Hopper, along with many other works.

The exhibition presents a mix of some of the most exceptional prints held by the collection along with important popular and ephemeral works, all collected in the first 50 years of the department’s history.

The Met’s Print Department was founded in 1916 by cuator William M. Ivins (1881-1961). The exhibition celebrates Ivins’s legacy along with that of his protégé A. Hyatt Mayor (1901-1980). The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue written by Freyda Spira with Peter Parshall, former head of the department of old master prints at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



“The Three Trees” by Rembrandt van Rijn, 1643. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929

From the very beginning, Ivins and Mayor composed the print collection to be like a “library-a corpus of works (not all distinctly masterful)” that describes in the most comprehensive way humanity’s aspirations, according to The Met. Mixing the exceptional and the everyday, Ivins and Mayor amassed a collection of hundreds of thousands of prints that is both encyclopedic in its scope and studied in its many areas of focus.

Their prescient understanding of the value of printed works across a wide spectrum, and the

intellectual framework from which their collecting practice arose, transformed the field of prints and broadened its purview beyond aesthetic, formal, and technical aspects. Their unique perspective in the area raised new questions about the function of works of art, their historical and cultural context, and their active role as both containers and purveyors of information, according to The Met.

Mirroring Ivins and Mayor's perspective, the exhibition considers printed matter as the entrée to the information age, recognizing prints as functional objects that spread information to an ever-expanding audience and reflect a changing society. The exhibition will also explore the ways the evolution of curatorial priorities affected the assembling of the department's collection of etchings and engravings.

The Power of Prints is organized by Freyda Spira, Associate Curator in the Metropolitan Museum's Department of Drawings and Prints.

The fully illustrated catalogue, published by the Metropolitan Museum, and will explore the lives and careers of Ivins and Mayor and their informed and assiduous acquisition of prints, photographs, and illustrated books for the Metropolitan Museum. The catalogue entries about the objects will also incorporate Ivins' and Mayor's own innovative notes on prints.

BASIC FACTS: "The Power of Prints: The Legacy of William M. Ivins and A. Hyatt Mayor" is on view from January 26 to May 22, 2016. The exhibition is installed on the second floor of the New York City art museum in Galleries 691-693. The exhibition is accompanied by a full slate of programming and exhibition tours.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is located at 1000 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10028. www.metmuseum.org.

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