Gods and Monsters: Images of Faith and Horror

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Anne Gary Pannell Center Gallery
Sweet Briar College

Things that go bump in the night. Guardian angels and patron saints. These suggest the poles of human experience, from evil to goodness, and encapsulate the many ways in which humanity has coped with the fearsome and the joyous across the ages. In the present exhibition, the monstrous is represented by images of revolt and war, death, and racism. Across the gallery space, saints, angels, and worshippers balance these dark forces with the promise of comfort and forgiveness. At either end of the room, one finds images suggestive of magical metamorphosis, philosophical inquiry, and nature-based deism.

Curators are often asked how exhibition concepts originate and how collections grow. A powerful gift quietly made by the late Jennifer Crispen, associate professor of physical education and coach at Sweet Briar for more than 30 years, provides ample proof that a single artwork can tell a complex ever-evolving story. A few years ago, in about 2007 or early 2008, Crispen asked Professor Ronald Horwega to look at a portfolio of German prints at her home and bring them to the art gallery so that then-director Rebecca Massie Lane could study them as a possible gift. When I arrived at the gallery in the summer of 2008, no one had had much opportunity to study the portfolio and so it quietly reposed in a box in a safe but out-of-the-way room here in the Pannell Center. The next winter I, and my colleague Nancy McDearmon, finally had time to explore and research the portfolio’s contents. We were, and continue to be, amazed and moved by the work we found, a collection of 16 woodcuts by German artist Renate Geisberg. Five prints from this portfolio anchor the middle of the “sinister” side of the present exhibition.

Geisberg’s portfolio proved to be such a powerful work that, while I spent weeks cataloging it, it began to speak to me of monsters and things that go bump in the night—a rich vein of artistic inspiration throughout human history. I began to take notice of other works in the art collection that depicted monsters, or monstrous deeds. Then my eye was caught by their opposites in the Sweet Briar collection—angels, saints, and other benevolent beings. Soon I also began to notice artifacts of worship—ancient Greek libation vessels and Medieval missals and Mesoamerican votive heads—in our care. My Art Gallery colleague Nancy McDearmon and student workers helpfully suggested many images I had not yet studied. An exhibition drawn from the permanent collection began to take shape. Gods and Monsters: Images of Faith and Horror is the result.

As always, Nancy McDearmon’s professional and artistic skills as a framer and as an exhibition designer are much in evidence. No exhibition would be seen hanging on a gallery wall without her hard work. Special thanks are due to the Art Gallery’s student assistants, Ashley Rust ’13 and Caitlin Playle ’13. Both have proved themselves to be excellent art handlers and installers and in the case of the present exhibition both have worked extra hours to make sure that everything was accomplished in a timely manner.

Karol A. Lawson
Director, Art Collection and Galleries
AGNES ANNE ABBOT 1897-1992
*Cathedral*
watercolor on paper
23 x 16 inches
Gift of Jennifer Leigh Crispen, Associate Professor of Physical Education, 1977-2008
ACG.1992.010

Born in Potsdam, Germany, to expatriate American parents, Abbot was raised and educated in Berlin. She and her family resettled in Boston when she was a young adult. Abbot taught art at Wellesley College 1933-1959 and exhibited widely in New England. Like many American artists of her generation, she spent time painting in the West, working in Colorado Springs in the late 1920s and in Taos, New Mexico, in 1940. This image of a Southwestern adobe church probably dates from one of these trips. She is best remembered for her watercolors.

ALBRECHT ALTDORFER 1480-1538
*The Passion from The Fall and Salvation of Mankind through the Life and Passion of Christ* ca. 1513
woodcut on paper
3 x 1 7/8 inches (each, approximate)
Transfer from Cochran Library
ACG.1973.050.a-i

Born in Regensburg, Bavaria, Altdorfer spent his whole career there, enjoying financial success—in addition to his art, he served as the city architect—as well as the respect of his fellow citizens, who elected him to the city council. Altdorfer, like many of his peers, also created art in the service of Maximillian I, Holy Roman Emperor (effectively the ruler of the territories now recognized as the nations of Germany and of Spain).

Known both as a painter and a printmaker, Altdorfer often introduced an element of surreal fantasy into his scenery. His graphic work is also noted for miniature formats, a diminutive scale that forces the viewer to peer closely at carefully detailed figures and interior scenes. Intended to be studied together, the prints seen here are about half of a set that depicts scenes from the life of Christ. These on view offer glimpses of Christ’s final days, from the Agony in the Garden through his painful and humiliating path through the streets of Jerusalem.

HANS SEBALD BEHAM 1500-1550
*Dialektica* ca. 1519
engraving on paper
3 1/2 x 2 1/8 inches
Bequest of Ruth Firm, Professor of Art History emerita
ACG.2003.005

Born in Nuremberg, Beham studied there with the masterful Albrecht Dürer. The artist, his brother Barthel Beham and fellow printmakers Georg Pencz, Heinrich Aldegrever, and Albrecht Altdorfer are collectively referred to by art historians as the “Little Masters.” Their diminutive prints, full of rich detail executed with exquisite technical skill, covered a wide range of subjects.
from Biblical figures, to the everyday life of their contemporary citizens, to symbolic figures such as this example.

The use of nude or partially clothed idealized figures to symbolize abstract concepts was a common practice among artists and scholars of the Renaissance. In this image, a robust female figure, dressed in drapery suggesting the ancient world, clutches scrolls and stands amid ancient ruins. She serves as a symbol of dialectics—a process of discussion and reasoning that seeks to juxtapose and ultimately synthesize opposing ideas derived from ancient Greek philosophy.

HANS SEBALD BEHAM 1500-1550
_Hercule et L’Hydra Lerne_ 1545
etching on paper
2 1/8 x 3 1/8 inches
Purchase made possible by the Friends of Art
ACG.2000.008

Here, in the second of his 12 labors—put to him by the gods as punishment for killing his own family in a fit of mindless rage—the ancient Greek hero Hercules takes on the Lernaean Hydra, a terrifying many-headed monster that lived in a swamp near Lake Lerna on the Greek Peloponnesus. This image is typical of European artists’ interest in Greek and Roman mythology during the Renaissance, as contemporary scholars rediscovered ancient texts and studied them anew. While Christian theologians sometimes sought to draw parallels between Classical or pagan myths and the Biblical tradition, visual artists welcomed such new subjects as an opportunity to portray the human figure in vigorous action and to explore fantastic and thrilling imagery.

BARBARA BENISH born 1958
_The Book of Revelation_ 1994
linocut on paper
15 ¾ x 11 ¼ inches
Purchase made possible by William and Catherine Caldwell Cabaniss ’61 and The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham through the Friends of Art, 2005
ACG.2005.004

A native of California, Benish has lived and worked in the Czech Republic since 1993, when a Fulbright Fellowship took her to Prague. She holds a BA in art and ethnology from the University of Hawaii and an MFA from Claremont Graduate University. She has taught at Pasadena City College and resides in Prague.

In its fierce yet beautiful illustrations of the apocalyptic text, this limited edition accordion book recalls Medieval and Early Renaissance imagery and harkens back to an age when such dramatic visions would have taken the place of written lessons for much of the population. Indeed, Benish has expressed admiration for Albrecht Dürer’s exploration of “the duality of the sacred and the profane” and deliberately seeks to capture the look and impact of early printed books.
Benish has remarked about this book: “I began this series in the summer of 1992. Riots had erupted in Los Angeles. A close friend was dying of AIDS. The war broke out in Sarajevo and anyone remembering a fraction of European history heard the shots….It seemed appropriate to put a knife to linoleum in the hot summer sun of an abandoned garden in Central Europe where the Golem still roams and McDonald’s has arrived.”

WILLIAM BLAKE 1757-1827
*The Reunion of the Soul and the Body* 1808
engraving on paper
14 7/8 x 12 inches
Gift of Lynn Pearson Russell ’69
ACG.1999.005

Born in London, Blake would spend his career there. He trained with artists Henry Pars and James Basire and at the Royal Academy. In the 1780s he established a print shop. By the end of that decade Blake’s political outlook turned increasingly revolutionary and he became a follower of the philosopher and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg.

By the early 1800s, Blake had become discouraged by harsh criticism of his artwork and a corresponding lack of patronage. He was also dismayed at what he saw as the sad state of the world and the shortcomings of human nature. He published two illustrated books in the period, *Jerusalem* (1804-1881) and *The Book of Job* (1818-1820). The image on view is from another book, commissioned by London art world impresario Robert Cromek, that presents a lengthy poem, “The Grave” (1743) by Robert Blair (1699-1746), and is illustrated with 12 images by Blake. Blake’s original watercolors for the book were engraved by Luigi Schiavonetti (1765-1810).

In addition to his output as a painter and printmaker, Blake was a poet—authoring, for example, *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794). In all his literary and visual work, he explored the nature of the human soul and the meaning of the universe. Blake, who experienced visions even as a child and who always evinced an ethereal style in his images, is known as one of the most individualistic and eccentric visual artists of the 19th century. In his unique style Blake conjured up the stuff of dreams and nightmares alike.

MARC CHAGALL 1887-1985
*Ruth and Boaz* from *Dessins pour la Bible* ca. 1960
lithograph on paper
14 x 10 ¼ inches
Gift of Dorothy Duncan Hodges ’57
ACG.2003.022

Born in Vitebsk, Russia, Chagall studied art in St. Petersburg and then with the artist Léon Bakst. Supported by a small grant from a government official, he was able to study in Paris in the 1910s. There he mingled with poets such as Guillaume Apollinaire and artists such as Amedeo Modigliani, whose avant-garde work encouraged Chagall to develop a personal style marked by surreal, dream-like imagery based on his early life in a Russian village. After service in the
Russian army during World War I Chagall returned to Paris, where his work caught the attention of art dealer Ambrose Vollard. It was Vollard who encouraged Chagall to begin illustrating books—the first he embarked upon was Nikolai Gogol’s *Dead Souls* (1842). A visit to the Holy Land in the early 1930s, coupled with his increasing despair as Europe descended into war, encouraged Chagall to plan illustrations of the Bible. The Jewish artist was able to spend the 1940s safely in the United States.

A central figure in the Old Testament’s Book of Ruth, Boaz is a wealthy, just, and pious man who marries Ruth out of respect and loyalty towards his relative, Naomi. Ruth is the widowed daughter-in-law of Naomi and in her loving support of Naomi during a difficult time of famine, Ruth’s character is shown to be especially admirable. The story is typically used to illustrate themes of kindness, loyalty, and redemption. The Bible identifies the son of Ruth and Boaz, Obed, as the grandfather of David and thus Ruth and Boaz are noted in the New Testament as ancestors of Jesus.

ÉTIENNE DELAUNE   ca. 1519-1583  
*Cain and Abel*   ca. 1561-1582  
engraving on paper  
3 1/16 x 4 1/16 inches  
Transfer from Cochran Library  
ACG.1976.006

A prolific French printmaker, Delaune is known for his small-scale, finely detailed images. This print depicts the sad story of the sons of Adam and Eve as told in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Jealous that God seems to have favored his brother’s offerings over his, Cain, a farmer, murders Abel, a shepherd. For eons, Cain has served Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as the archetype of human evil.

ALBRECHT DÜRER   1471-1528  
*The Prodigal Son Amid the Swine* (illustrating a parable from The Gospel of St. Luke)   1496  
engraving on paper  
9 5/8 x 7 ½ inches  
Purchase made possible by the Friends of Art, 1991  
ACG.1991.004

The leading printmaker of the Northern Renaissance, Dürer explored a wide variety of Biblical subjects throughout his career. Here, in an image remarkable for its contemporary detail and timeless emotional depth, he drew on a parable told by Jesus and related in Luke 15: 11-32. The wayward son is pictured in the depths of despair as he grovels for sustenance in the barnyard, realizing at last what he has forsaken by leaving home to live in debauchery.
RENATE GEISBERG 1898-1972

Der Totentanz (The Dance of Death) 1937
woodcut on paper
24 ½ x 17 ½ inches (each, approximate)
Gift of Jennifer Leigh Crispen and Whitney Crispen Hagins in memory of their friend Agnes Anne Abbot

König Tod (King Death)
ACG.2009.012.004.001

Der Unfall (The Accident)
ACG.2009.012.004

Das Bose Lied (The Evil Song)
ACG.2009.012.004.006

Der Fremde Gast (The Foreign Guest)
ACG.2009.012.004.010

Kameraden (Comrades)
ACG.2009.012.004.012

Born in Berlin, Geisberg studied in Paris in the late 1920s to about 1932. She returned to Berlin in the 1930s with her husband Julius Wichmann, a painter in the manner of the French avant-garde artists known as the Fauves.

At present, no more detail about her professional life has been found, but this portfolio Der Totentanz reveals a wealth of intriguing information. On view are five out 16 prints included in the set. The artistic interpretation of a danse macabre has a long history in Northern Europe. Geisberg adapted the ancient formula to modern times. The portfolio is rendered in a primitive Expressionist style, printed with heavy, almost industrial, black ink on substantial but not refined paper. Each print is titled, signed, and dated in pencil by the artist. The portfolio’s title page (not on view) is signed in ink by both Geisberg and the gallery owner who published and exhibited the portfolio, Ferdinand Möller (who was known for his support of the Expressionist artists of Die Brücke). This portfolio is also numbered, handwritten in ink in the colophon, one out of an edition of 40. That suggests that it was kept either by the artist or the gallery owner and publisher, Ferdinand Möller. Möller figured prominently in the art world of Nazi Germany—he would auction some of the works seized from museums and labeled as “degenerate art”—and continued his gallery business after the war. He eventually settled, with much of his inventory intact, in Cologne.

The portfolio’s images show a skeletal figure stalking the unsuspecting citizens of contemporary Germany. When one considers the date of the work—1937—and the locations in which it was exhibited—Berlin and Münich—and the difficult subject, Geisberg emerges as a brave individual with a strong, and dangerous, point of view. Möller closed his gallery in 1937 and the Nazi government prohibited Geisberg from further exhibitions. She spent the years 1941-1952 in the small city of Borgloh and died in Berlin in 1972.
HANS BALDUNG GRIEN  1484-1545
Saint James the Greater from a series Christ and the Apostles  ca. 1518
etching on paper
8 ¼ 5 inches
Transfer from Cochran Library
ACG.1973.016.b

A pupil of Albrecht Dürer in the very early 1500s, Baldung Grien spent most of his adult life in Strassburg (now Strasbourg) and much of his output was as a book illustrator. A painter as well as a printmaker, in addition to his more traditional Christian subjects Baldung Grien was uncommonly interested in depicting witches.

The print on view depicts one of the first apostles to join Jesus. Executed by King Herod, St. James the Greater is also considered to be the first martyred Christian saint. He is the patron saint of Spain—where he travelled and proselytized—and his remains are traditionally thought to repose at Santiago de Compostella, one of the Christian world’s oldest and most important pilgrimage sites.

UTAGAWA HIROSHIGE  1797-1858
Night Attack of the Forty-seven Ronin on Moronô’s Mansion from Act 11 of the Kanadehan Chûshingura (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers)  ca. 1840
woodblock on paper
9 x 13 ¾
Gift of Miss Ruth Woodhull Smith
ACG.1970.049.b

The print illustrates an episode from the Kanadehan Chûshingura (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers), one of Japanese literature’s best-known and best-loved adventure epics and a perpetual inspiration for kabuki theater. Rooted in real events from the early 18th century, the Chûshingura tells of warriors bent on avenging their lord. In the tale, Moronô is the duplicitous governor of Kamakura and Hangan is his manipulated and disgraced retainer forced to commit suicide. In the nighttime attack depicted here Moronô will lose his head, a grisly trophy soon to be borne away by Hangan’s widow and son.

PETER HURD  1904-1984
Sermon from Revelations  1938
lithograph on paper
10 x 13 ½ inches
Sweet Briar College Art Fund Purchase, 1941
ACG.1941.005

Born and raised in Roswell, New Mexico, Hurd would spend much of his adult life on a ranch in San Patricio, New Mexico. He attended West Point for two years but left to study art with famed illustrator W. C. Wyeth in 1924. He married the artist’s daughter Henriette, herself an accomplished painter, in 1929. It is said that he introduced his brother-in-law Andrew Wyeth to the medium of egg tempera. Hurd served as a correspondent for Life magazine during World
War II. This image, typical of robust portrayals of American life the 1930s, records a revival meeting in a dramatic, energetic fashion that hints of near violence or hysteria. Note that the preacher, to the right, seems to hurl words from the holy book at his listeners, one of whom has stood up as if to better catch them as they fly past.

GENARO IBAÑEZ 1903-1983  
*Dia de Fiesta* from *Santuario de Copacabana* 1968  
woodcut on paper  
9 11/16 x 12 9/16 inches  
Bequest of Lydia Newland, Cochran Library assistant librarian, 1940-1978  
ACG.1980.023.j

GENARO IBAÑEZ 1903-1983  
*Virgen de Copacabana* from *Santuario de Copacabana* 1968  
woodcut on paper  
12 9/16 x 9 11/16 inches  
Bequest of Lydia Newland, Cochran Library assistant librarian, 1940-1978  
ACG.1980.023.a

Ibañez was a native of La Paz, Bolivia. This particular portfolio celebrates the sanctuary of Bolivia’s patron saint, the Virgin de la Candelaria, at Copacabana, a city located on the shores of Lake Titicaca and near the nation’s border with Peru. It is one of the Americas’ oldest shrines to the Virgin Mary. Not coincidentally, before European conquest the area was associated with the native Andean peoples’ deity Copakawana, a goddess of marriage and fertility.

SALLY MANN born 1951  
*Shiva at Whistle Creek* (from *Immediate Family*) 1992  
gelatin silver enlargement print  
20 x 24 inches  
Purchase made possible by the Friends of Art, 1995  
ACG.1995.005

A native and still resident of Lexington, Virginia, Mann was educated at Bennington College and Hollins College (now Hollins University). She had her first solo exhibition in 1977 at the Corcoran College of Art, Washington, DC. In the years since, her astonishingly beautiful but simultaneously disturbing photographs of her nude children and husband have elicited both praise and condemnation. Over the past decade she has moved away from figure studies into large format views of haunting battlefield landscapes and delicate studies of dead creatures. *Time* magazine named Mann “America’s best photographer” in 2001 and she will be honored in late 2010 with a major exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

This photograph, from her third major series, *Immediate Family*, features Mann’s daughter Jessie who was at the time about 11 or 12 years old. The girl’s clasped hands and humble posture suggest an attitude of prayer or supplication. “Shiva” in the title of this work may refer obliquely to the powerful Hindu deity of destruction and creation or to the Jewish rites for mourning the death of close relatives.
DEB MELL  born 1955
*The Seer*  2001
mixed media
45 x 32 inches
Purchase made possible by contributions from the Art Gallery, Cochran Library, Studio Art Department, and students
DC.2002.001

Mell earned a BA in art at Illinois State University and subsequently studied at the Brooklyn Museum’s art school as a Max Beckmann memorial scholar. She has been supported by two Dodge Foundation fellowships for residencies at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts.

The artist, who is of Cherokee heritage, purposefully blends Native American traditions with a visionary aesthetic in her mixed media assemblages. Here, she has created a magical shaman-like figure outfitted with antlers made of plastic dolls’ arms and legs. She has noted, “…my grandfather taught me how to create whatever I thought of by using whatever I found…I use the playfulness inherent in most myths and legends as a means of turning personal frustrations and fantasies into family portraits.”

FREDERICK MONHOFF  1897-1975
*Penitentes, Nombe, New Mexico*  ca. 1930-1950
etching on paper
4 13/16 x 5 7/8 inches
Gift of Hildegarde Flanner Monhoff ’21
ACG.1987.005.ss

Monhoff was born in New York but raised in Los Angeles. He attended the University of California, Berkeley. Trained as an architect and illustrator, he taught design at the Otis Art Institute 1926-1950 and the Pasadena Art Institute, and architecture at UCLA.

His best known prints were done in the 1930s and 1940s and, like the example displayed here, feature images of the Hispanic and Native American populace of the American Southwest. The figures shown are participating in a Holy Week ritual followed by particularly devout Catholics in the Southwest.

ANA MARIA PACHECO  born 1943
*Tales of Transformation 2*  ca. 1990
drypoint on paper
6 5/8 x 7 ½ inches
Purchase made possible by the Friends of Art
ACG.1999.009.b

A native of the Brazilian city of Goias, Pacheco studied at university there before moving to London in the early 1970s to attend the Slade School of Art. She has lived and worked in the United Kingdom ever since.
Deeply affected by the political turmoil in Brazil that resulted in a military takeover in 1964, the artist still searches for meaning and reassurance in a wide variety of mythology, fables, and folk tales that deal with shape-shifting transformation. The series from which this print is taken appears to have been inspired by ancient Greek stories such as that of the Homeric sorceress Circe or perhaps the alluring Sirens of his Odyssey. Pacheco reinvigorates these ancient tales in a quirky, very modern fashion that blends a surreal, rather whimsical sensibility with primitive-looking figures.

JOSÉ GUADALUPE POSADA 1851-1913
*Calavera Huertista* ca. 1913
engraving on paper
8 9/16 x 8 9/16 inches
presumed Sweet Briar College Art Fund Purchase
ACG.1973.058

Born in Aguascalientes, Mexico, Posada began his professional career as a political cartoonist for a short-lived hometown newspaper, *El Jicote*. In the 1870s and 1880s he ran a lithography business in León. Moving to Mexico City in the late 1880s, Posada worked for *La Patria Ilustrada* and subsequently worked as a book illustrator. The motif of a skull, or *calavera*, was one Posada used frequently in his wicked caricatures and sharp political cartoons.

The artist here reviles supporters of Mexico’s president José Victoriano Huerta Márquez, known as “Hueristas” during the Mexican Revolution. Huerta, also popularly called “The Jackal,” seized the presidency in a 1913 coup and established a military dictatorship. Under intense domestic and international pressure, he resigned from the presidency in 1914.

JAUNE QUICK-TO-SEE SMITH born 1940
*Racism: Bones of Color* 1989
charcoal and pastel on paper
29 x 41 inches
Purchase made possible by the Friends of Art
ACG.1992.003

A member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai nation, Quick-to-See Smith was born in Montana and is of Salish, French-Cree, and Shoshone descent. She was educated at Framingham State College, Massachusetts, and earned an MFA from the University of New Mexico in 1976. The artist lives and works in New Mexico and in 2005 was honored as the recipient of the New Mexico Governor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts.

Here, as in all her mature work, Quick-to-See Smith evokes elements of Native American cultural traditions—in this case ancient petroglyphs—to address the modern political, economic, and social issues with which her people grapple.
REMBRANDT HARMENZOON VAN RIJN 1606-1669
*Return of the Prodigal Son* (illustrating a parable from The Gospel of St. Luke) 1636
etching on paper
6 1/8 x 5 3/16 inches
Purchase made possible by the Friends of Art, 1979
ACG.1979.002
Known for his powerful, evocative paintings as well as for etchings of immense delicacy, Rembrandt included many Biblical stories in his repertoire of images. Shown here is the climax of the parable of the Prodigal Son, told by Jesus and related in Luke 15: 11-32, as father enfolds son in a forgiving embrace: “…his father saw him and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him…this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” Rembrandt’s 1662 oil painting of the same subject is in the collection of The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

ERIC RENNER born 1941
*Ticul: Graves* 1968
gelatin silver print
10 x 31 ¾ inches
Gift of the artist
ACG.1989.005
Educated at the University of Cincinnati and the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Renner is widely known as an expert in pinhole photography. The work on display, a 360 degree view of a graveyard in the city of Ticul, located in Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula, is an example of the pinhole technique. It dates from quite early in Renner’s professional career. At the time he donated this to Sweet Briar, he and his wife, photographer Nancy Spencer (an alumna of Hollins University), lived in Lexington, Virginia, and worked at Hollins and Washington and Lee. They now live in New Mexico where they publish *Pinhole Journal* and run Pinhole Resource.

HANS THEO RICHTER 1902-1969
*Faust* 1948
wood engraving
27 13/16 x 19 3/4 inches
Gift of Anne Marshall Whitley ’47
ACG.1987.001
Very little can be gleaned from available resources about this German artist’s background and training. It is interesting to note that the print was made just after World War, so perhaps it was intended as a comment on the state of the world in general and Germany in particular.

The complicated, nightmare-like composition seen here illustrates the plot of *Faust* (1808/1832) by the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). The perennially popular tale—much embroidered upon by Goethe—debuted in the 16th century relates the story Dr. Faust (or Faustus) who is a scholar and scientist. He is so eager to learn all there is to know in the cosmos that he makes a deal with the devil. The story has been used throughout the centuries as a morality tale, pitting integrity against ambition.
GEORGES ROUault 1871-1958
The Baptism of Christ from Miserère
designed ca. 1914-1918, plates engraved ca. 1922-1927, published 1948
etching and aquatint on paper
21 ¾ x 16 5/8
Sweet Briar College Art Fund Purchase
AGC.1957.004

Born in Paris and apprenticed as a youth to a glassmaker, Rouault studied at the École des Arts Dècoratifs, the École des Beaux Arts, and with the artist Gustave Moreau. In the early 1900s, disenchanted with the violence, follies, and excesses of the modern world, Rouault turned increasingly to spiritual themes. Indeed, his visions of compassion and pathos are so profound that he is generally regarded as the greatest religious artist of the 20th century. In the late 1910s, with the encouragement of the art dealer Ambrose Vollard, Rouault turned from painting to prints and began to compile illustrated books and series.

This image is from a volume of 58 images titled Miserère (from the Latin “Miserere mei, Deus” [“Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy loving kindness”], Psalm 51:1). This plate, depicting John the Baptist baptizing Jesus, is associated with Romans 6:3-5: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection….” Originally designed by the artist during World War I, Miserère was finally published by Vollard in the aftermath of World War II.

ALISON SAAR  born 1956
Blue Plate Special 1993
lithograph, etching, and linocut on paper
24 ½ x 24 ½ inches
Purchase made possible by the Friends of Art
AGC.1996.002

The daughter of artist Betye Saar (whose work is also on view here), Alison Saar was born and raised in Southern California. She now lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She was educated at Scripps College and the Otis Art Institute and has been honored throughout her career with a number of prestigious grants from, for example, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation.

Like her mother, Alison Saar has spent her career exploring the African American cultural diaspora and searching for spiritual resonance in many interconnected streams of religion, folk traditions and popular culture, and mystical ritual. Also like her mother, Alison Saar employs a wide variety of materials in her work, from frying pans to carved wooden snakes. In this print, for example, she used the pattern from a tin ceiling tile as a design element.
This print references a variety of traditions—religious, political, and popular. The severed head recalls both the Biblical story of John the Baptist, beheaded by King Herod for the seductive dancer Salomé, and the horrifying imagery of racially-motivated lynchings and beatings of 20th century America. The flippant title—one assumes an oblique reference to daily menu selections in an ordinary eatery—stands in stark contrast to these profoundly disturbing references to the slaughter of innocents.

BETYE SAAR  born 1926

*The Long Memory*  1998
serigraph on paper
14 5/8 x 11 ¾ inches
Gift of Catherine Caldwell Cabaniss ’61
ACG.2001.010.007

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Saar earned a degree in graphic design at UCLA. She continued her art studies in the 1960s and 1970s at a variety of universities in Southern California. A prolific artist, still actively exhibiting in her 80s, Saar—whose family combines African-American, Irish, and Native American roots—has spent her career exploring the complexities of her own cultural heritage.

Influenced by the artist Joseph Cornell, she became best known for her work in collage and three dimensional assemblages. Though this print is flat, Saar’s abiding interest in collecting and composing assemblages of thought-provoking found objects is quite in evidence. While the altar-like image does not have a specific subject, it captures the artist’s career-long fascination with mysticism, the occult and spiritual rituals. The centrally placed hands are reminiscent of Buddhist gestures of prayer and supplication, which the medallion above—patterned with peacock feathers, widely used as a symbol of enlightenment sue to the eye-like pattern, and an human open eye—suggests an all-seeing, omnipotent presence.

UTAGAWA SADAHIDE  1807-1879

*The Fleet of Ashikaga Takauji Departing for Battle*  ca. 1825-1860
woodblock on paper
13 7/8 x 18 3/8 inches
Gift of Carol Rice M.D., College physician and Professor of Health Education, 1920-1940
ACG.1979.003

The subject of this print, Ashikaga Takauji, was the first shogun (1338-1358) of the Ashikaga shogunate. In the 1330s he was instrumental in aiding the Emperor Go-Daigo in seizing Kyoto during the Genkō War. During the 1340s and 1350s, Takauji was deeply involved in the internal strife and warfare caused by the opposing forces of the Southern and Northern imperial courts. His impressive military and political exploits figure in the epic narrative *Taiheiki (Chronicle of the Great Peace)*, published in 1371.
HANS LEONHARD SCHÄUFELEIN     ca. 1480-1540

The Last Judgment     ca. 1517-1539
woodcut on paper
9 ½ x 6 ½ inches
Sweet Briar College Art Fund Purchase
ACG. 1962.008

Born in Nuremberg, Schäufelein was inescapably influenced by Albrecht Dürer, for whom he worked as an apprentice or assistant. Like Dürer and many of their contemporaries, Schäufelein worked under the patronage of Maximilian I.

This print is far removed from the exquisite detail and graceful style of engravers such as Dürer or Albrecht Altdorfer. In its relative simplicity it seems to recall Medieval rather than Renaissance imagery. In the image, Christ sits in judgment of mankind, his head bracketed by a sword and a lily, while below him the dead rise from their graves.

VIRGIL SOLIS     1514-1562

Angel with the Key Overcoming Satan     ca. 1540-1562
woodcut on paper
4 5/8 x 3 inches
Transfer from Cochran Library
ACG.1976.021

Solis, a native and resident of Nuremberg, Germany, came from a family of artists.

The subject of this small image (one which Solis’ contemporary Albrecht Dürer also interpreted) is taken from the Book of Revelation of the New Testament, which tells of the end of days, specifically Chapter 20: 1-3: “And I saw an angel come down from heaven having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled….”

NANCY SPERO     1926-2009

Goddess II     1987-8
lithograph and letterpress on paper
22 ¼ x 30 inches
Gift of Mary Scales Lawson ’70, 2005
ACG.2005.005

Born in Cleveland and raised in Chicago, Spero was educated at the Art Institute of Chicago and the University of Colorado, Boulder. She spent several years studying in Paris after World War II. She and her husband, artist Leon Golub, settled in New York in the 1950s.

A noted Feminist artist—for example she was a founding member of A.I.R., a women’s cooperative gallery, in 1972—Spero was significantly inspired by imagery of women and the
female body throughout history. In this print she combined a figurine of a Prehistoric fertility goddess, a carved head of the ancient Greek goddess Hera, and a primitive dancer.

LUCAS VAN LEYDEN 1494-1533
Prudencia from the series The Virtues 1530
engraving on paper
6 3/8 x 4 inches
Sweet Briar College Art Fund Purchase
ACG.1964.003

This Dutch painter and printmaker was born and spent his professional life in Leiden.

The image depicts an allegory of the virtue of prudence. Considered the root of all admirable characteristics by ancient Greek philosophers, prudence was incorporated into Roman Catholic theology as one of the four cardinal virtues (joining justice, temperance, and fortitude). Here, Prudencia holds her usual attributes, a mirror and a compass, symbolizing measured contemplation.

Such allegorical figures appear throughout European art of the Renaissance and beyond. In the 15th century, a print series depicting the virtues would have provided Lucas van Leyden and his peers—as well as their patrons—an opportunity to study the human body and would also have demonstrated an artist’s and his buyer’s Classical education.

ANDREA VICENTINO (Andrea dei Michielli) ca. 1542-ca. 1617
The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian ca. 1583-1605
pen and ink on paper
7 ¼ x 5 5/8 inches
Anonymous gift in honor of Eleanor Barton, Professor of Art History
ACG.1963.001

An Italian painter, Vicentino spent most of his professional life in Venice.

This ink drawing depicts a Christian saint martyred in the third century. A Roman solider, and then a member of the Praetorian Guard, Sebastian adopted Christianity and converted a number of others in the service of the Roman imperial service. Upon his discovery, the emperor Diocletian ordered Sebastian shot to death with arrows. Though gravely wounded, Sebastian survived the ordeal only to be beaten to death shortly thereafter on the emperor’s orders. Sebastian is still considered by Catholics to be the patron saint of soldiers. The subject of Sebastian’s martyrdom was popular throughout the Renaissance, as his athletic form gave artists a welcome opportunity to portray the male nude.
KARA WALKER  born 1969
The Emancipation Approximation  2000
serigraph on paper
43 7/8 x 33 15/16
Purchase made possible by Elizabeth Forsyth Harris ’60
ACG.2002.001

Born in Stockton, California, Walker was raised in Atlanta. She earned a BFA from the Atlanta College of Art in 1991 and an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1994. Despite her youth, she has exhibited widely across the US and abroad and was honored in 1997 with a prestigious MacArthur Foundation achievement award. Walker represented the US at the 2002 São Paulo Biennial.

Walker is best, perhaps infamously, known for her monumental silhouettes. While her method superficially harkens back to 18th and 19th-century fashionable portraiture, her subject matter is anything but genteel for it powerfully tackles issues of oppression, exploitation, and violence. Using silhouettes that suggest the worst of racial stereotypes, Walker forces the viewer to confront painful issues from the nation’s past. Here, a graceful Southern belle delicately pauses with an axe after chopping off the heads of countless victims.

UNKNOWN
Sanctus Marcus Evangelista (St. Mark the Evangelist)  1400s
Sanctus Joannes Evangelista (St. John the Evangelist)  1400s
woodcut with hand coloring
3 ¾ x 2 ¾ inches (each, approximate)
Transfer from Cochran Library
ACG.1976.026.a and b

Saint Mark the Evangelist, author of the New Testament’s Gospel of Mark, was a historical figure. A disciple of Christ and founder of the Christian church in Africa, he became bishop of Alexandria, Egypt, in the mid first century. He is typically symbolized by the lion. The historical identity of the author or authors of the Gospel of John is debated by historians, though Christian tradition holds that the author was St. John the Apostle, brother of St. James the Greater. The Gospel’s author is typically symbolized by an eagle.

UNKNOWN (Rouen or Limoges, France)
Missal Leaves  ca. 1425
ink on vellum
11 ½ x 8 inches (each, approximate)
Bequest of Eva Matthews Sanford, Professor of History, 1937-1954
ACG.1954.005.a and b

These pages, likely cut out of a single volume by an antique book dealer (often done in the past to maximize sales profits; a practice now frowned upon by connoisseurs and scholars), are probably from a 15th-century French missal. Such a book instructed priests in the appropriate liturgy for celebrating mass throughout the calendar year. The page on the left includes Biblical
passages from Colossians and the Gospel of Matthew and identifies the Psalm and a lesson from Ephesians for the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity. The texts excerpted are Colossians 1:16-18; Matthew 5: 33-42; Psalm 86; Ephesians 3:13-21. The page on the right, guiding the service for the feast of Saints John and Paul, includes passages from the Gospel of Luke, Psalm 34, and the Gospel of John.

UNKNOWN (India)
*Page of the Kalpa Sutra* 1550
ink on paper
4 ½ x 10 inches
Sweet Briar College Art Fund Purchase
ACG.1969.006

These are pages from the Kalpa Sutra, the revered holy text of Jainism. An ancient religion of the Indian subcontinent, its followers today form a minority in the modern nation of India. The book contains the biographies of Jainism’s 24 tirthankaras, or revered founders. The original text is thought to have been written in the 6th century BC.

UNKNOWN (Tibet)
*White Tara*
gouache on fabric 1800s
10 ¾ x 8
Gift of Florence Mary Maupin ’52 and Gabrielle Maupin Bielenstein ’52
ACG.1995.023

In Tibetan practice, Tārā is a female Bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism and a female Buddha in Vajrayana Buddhism. The “White Tārā”—one of a number of bodhisattvas representing similar concepts—traditionally embodies compassion, longevity, and serenity.

UNKNOWN
Published by OGIZ [Obiedineniye Gosudarstvennikh Izdatelstv] (Amalgamated State Publishing Houses), Moscow and Leningrad
*Untitled (‘Those who try to attack our country will be rebuffed…” J[osef] Stalin)* 1935
lithograph on paper
22 x 35 inches
Gift or transfer from an unknown source
ACG.2011.007.001

This propaganda poster—issued by the Soviet Union’s state-run publishers—like thousands printed in huge numbers during the 20th-century—was designed for the edification and encouragement of Soviet citizens. The text in the upper left is a well known quotation from Josef Stalin. First uttered in Stalin’s 1934 address to the 17th Party Congress and often repeated and paraphrased by Stalin and his followers in speeches, songs, and writings. It reads: “Those who try to attack our country will receive a stunning rebuff to teach them not to poke their pig’s snout

* The Art Gallery staff is indebted to Caitlin Playle ’13 for her identification and translation of the Latin text.
into our Soviet garden again.” Clearly used here as an ominous warning about Adolf Hitler’s ever-strengthening Nazi war machine—already quite alarming to his European neighbors in the mid 1930s—the quotation finds a chilling embodiment in the uniformed hog, armed with a wicked knife, that creeps across the globe towards Mother Russia (Soyuz Sovetskich Sotsialistichestikh Reppublic, abbreviated in the Cyrillic alphabet as CCCP).

workshop of MICHAEL WOLGEMUT 1434-1519
Circe and Ulysses from The Nuremberg Chronicle ca. 1490
woodcut on paper
4 7/8 x 6 ¾ inches
Transfer from Cochran Library, 1973
ACG.1973.021

This image, cut from a larger page of The Nuremberg Chronicle, an ambitious and lavishly illustrated history of the world, purports to show Ulysses’ encounter with the sorceress Circe. As recounted in Homer’s Odyssey, the hero Ulysses (or Odysseus; ruler of the kingdom of Ithaca) and his men, while sailing home from the Trojan War, stopped at the island of Aeaea to get food and fresh water. The island was enchanted, home to Circe and a host of beautiful women. To keep Ulysses with her, Circe cast a magic spell that turned his crew into pigs. Circe and Ulysses are portrayed here in contemporary 15th-century garb and he sails in a “modern” ship. His hapless men are seen in the ship as animals.

KL 10-13-2011

*The Art Gallery staff thanks Olga Rigg and Katia Suntseva, both Sweet Briar College staff members, for their help with the translation. It can also be found in John N. Hazard, “National Security and the Soviet Union,” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science vol. 241 (September 1945), p. 151.*