

Sex, violence, horror in 400-year-old works

If you're one of those people who wish we could get away from contemporary culture's obsession with violence and sex, avoid the depictions of horror that seem to delight others, and curtail the tendency of artists toward visual complication and distortion, you might want to steer clear of Stanford University's Cantor Arts Center until June 20.

If, however, you believe our primal fears and urges are proper subjects for art, if the riddle of depiction itself fascinates you, you will find it hard to tear yourself away from the deeply engaging exhibition that opens there Wednesday, Feb. 10. And, nearly incidental to their relevance for our time: All the works in the show were made more than 400 years ago.

Myth, Allegory, and Faith: The Kirk Edward Long Collection of Mannerist Prints: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesdays-Mondays (Thursdays 11 a.m.-8 p.m.) through June 20. Free. Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, 328 Lomita Drive, Stanford. (650) 723-4177. www.mu.seum.stanford.edu.

"Myth, Allegory, and Faith: The Kirk Edward Long Collection of Mannerist Prints" is an extraordinary event. Organized by Bernard Barryte, the museum's curator of European art, the exhibition exceeds all expectations of curatorial ambition, attention to detail and quality of execution.

Museums used to regularly attempt serious exhibitions, like this one, of the art of the Old Masters. They were scholarly affairs, years in the making. The product of rigorous research documented by substantial catalog essays, they would encompass the very best works of art in the finest condition available in all the world. That kind of show, for reasons finan-

"In all your works be sure to include at least one figure that is all contorted, mysterious, and difficult."

Paolo Pino, 16th century painter and theorist



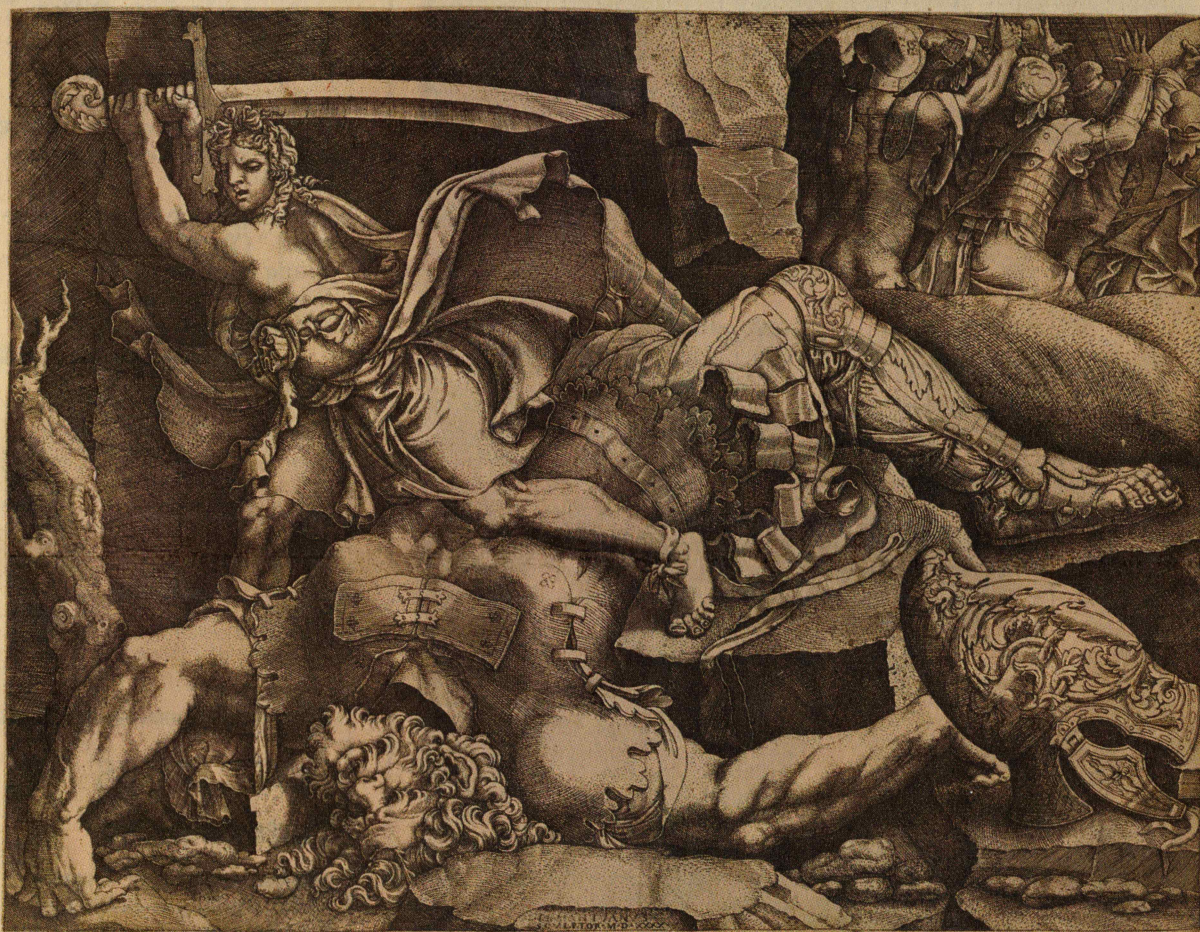
Cantor Arts Center, Stanford University

"Narcissus" (c. 1529), Antonio da Trento (Italy, c. 1510-c. 1550) after Parmigianino (Italy, 1503-40).



Cantor Arts Center photos

"The Vision of Ezekiel" (1554), engraving by Giogrio Ghisi, from "Myth, Allegory, and Faith: The Kirk Edward Long Collection of Mannerist Prints."



Above: Aegidius Sadeler II (Flanders, c. 1570-1629) after Spranger, "Wisdom Conquers Ignorance" (c. 1600). Left: "David Beheading Goliath" (1540), by Giovanni Battista Scultori.

The graphic imagery of Mannerism

Mannerism from page E1

cial and faddish, is almost unheard of today outside the wealthiest and best-staffed institutions.

Barryte, the Cantor and Long have pulled it off. The curator and the patron worked for 13 years to assemble the collection of some 700 engravings. With the support of muse-

um personnel and expertise, all the prints have been meticulously cataloged; about 180 are being shown. Barryte and a large team of contributors have produced a monumental publication to accompany the show: 704 pages, hundreds of excellent illustrations, essays by 10 top scholars in the field.

Mannerism — the dominant European style of the 16th century — is pretty easy to spot in its classic form: works over-stuffed with visual information, with figures lined up close against the picture plane; peopled with heavily muscled nudes twisting, writhing, reaching, often in extreme poses no ordinary human could adopt; all of it cast in an exaggerated, raking light that pops every detail into sharp contrast, giving the whole image an all-over flickering energy.

It's been a long time since anyone used the term pejoratively, but

"mannerist" once meant overly stylized and synthetic, as opposed to the more naturalistic pictorial conventions of the High Renaissance period that came before. Now we take the term and the movement at face value, just as we might another term that once was meant to denigrate: queer. And if ever there was a moment in art that gleefully jumbled sexuality (even as it unequivocally promoted male privilege and dominance), this was it.

A print made in about 1600 by the Flemish engraver Aegidius Sadeler II after a work by Bartolo-

meus Spranger, "Wisdom Conquers Ignorance," erotically depicts the armored and decidedly powerful, yet sexualized, figure of the Roman goddess Minerva. She tugs provocatively on the rope that binds the hands of donkey-eared Ignorance, her foot caressing his submissively upturned neck.

"The Dream" is a 1545 print by an unknown artist after Michelangelo — whose work, along with ancient precedents, is credited as central to the development of the Mannerist style. Arranged around a nude male figure, legs splayed, muscles rippling, are images of fleshly temptation, including a copulating couple; a bag of coins; a disembodied but erect penis; a goose being roasted on a spit; and vignettes of drinking, fighting and other carryings-on.

In one catalog essay, Barryte quotes a 16th century painter and theorist, Paolo Pino, whose prescription for success pretty much sums up the Mannerist style. "In all your works be sure to include at least one figure that is all contorted, mysterious, and difficult," Pino wrote, "so that from it you may be seen to be [an artist of] worth by whoever understands the

art's perfection."

Giovanni Battista Scultori's "David Beheading Goliath" (1540) would surely have suited Pino. While the plate is almost entirely filled with the body of Goliath, down for the count, it is David with his long, curving sword who first gets our attention. He could be in the midst of a landscape, straddling a boulder, but on closer inspection it becomes clear that he is astride the giant, whose buckled torso and lolting head slowly emerge from the lyrically tangled composition.

Prints can, at first, be hard to look at. Surrounded as we are by a world of images ever bigger, brighter, more colorful and more kinetic, we might overlook a detailed picture in dark tones on a small page. To see this exhibition takes an hour, two hours; the introductory text allows that it may, in fact, require "many return visits." But there are few more sublimely, cathartically horrific — more contemporary — experiences than Scultori's single, great picture.

Charles Desmarais is The San Francisco Chronicle's art critic. E-mail: cdesmarais@sfbchronicle.com Twitter: @Artguy1

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Crossword Puzzle

CAPON	ARFS	ZONK
ALONE	ZULU	INCA
SKIERS	STRANS	PORT
KARAOKE	TTOP	
ELO	OCS	AROMAS
TITTER	UTNE	AVA
	RATTLE	UKES
BRIT	SELEVATOR	
FLAX	GLINE	
OUT	OGLE	GOSOLO
RESCUE	STU	NAB
	ACTS	HELPERS
HITCHHIKERS	RIIDE	
ARCH	OMIT	TIDES
TRUE	TINA	SEARS

Sudoku Puzzle

6	2	7	1	3	8	5	4	9
4	8	1	7	5	9	3	2	6
3	5	9	4	6	2	1	8	7
7	6	2	5	1	3	4	9	8
1	3	8	9	4	7	6	5	2
5	9	4	2	8	6	7	3	1
9	1	6	3	2	4	8	7	5
8	7	3	6	9	5	2	1	4
2	4	5	8	7	1	9	6	3

Today's Crossword

CRAB	KOAN	FADED
HAKE	ABBE	AMORE
ENID	NOSE	LEDGE
FINESSE	RECROOM	
	CLASS	ROI
STAKES	CRUNCHED	
POSSE	WEEP	AUDI
ART	PLANETS	GIN
NARC	AGED	WRECK
SHOULDER	HEARTY	
	REL	YIELD
MISSTEP	DELIVER	
ADMIT	AULD	ACRE
YOUVE	TREE	TROT
ALTER	HERD	ESSE

Challenger

1	1	5	4	11
9	1	5	9	24
1	3	6	8	18
9	1	9	3	22
20	6	25	24	11

Chess

1. Bf7!
(threatening
2. c7 mate, as
well as Bxh5).

PUZZLE
ANSWERS

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