

Toledo Museum offers welcome break

By Benita Bornstein
special writer

Tired of shopping crowded malls and long lines? "Twentieth Century American Drawings: The Figure in Context" exhibition will bring a welcome break and at the same time enhance the holiday season.

This major exhibition of 90 figurative images is a comprehensive overview of American art through the perspective of drawing, a medium whereby the hand of the artist remains visible.

The show explores the figure as a major or minor element in landscape, cityscape, interiors, or fantasy designs.

The drawings are done in a variety of media including watercolor, pencil, ink, charcoal, and pastel. They range in size from small, intimate sketches to commanding large-scale images with the impact of large contemporary paintings.

MARILYN SYMMES, curator of graphic arts, has opened the exhibition with two contrasting modern drawings — the figure in interior and exterior landscape.

In the pencil drawing "Study for Three Sisters" by Sidney Goodman, 1981, the figures are positioned in a pyramidal composition while sitting on the horizontal plane of a sofa. In this interior setting, Goodman reveals the psychological interplay between the sisters.

In "Dazzle-2" by Idelle Weber, 1982-83, a listless figure is resting on a folding lounge in the late afternoon sun. In this charcoal drawing, the foliage is dark, intense and active, forming an interesting contrast to the languid figure.

The remainder of the exhibition is hung chronologically, guiding the viewer through a panorama of diverse and changing styles from early turn-of-the-century neo-classicism to modern photo-realism and abstraction.

In addition, a commercial illustration by Charles Dana Gibson (also known as designer of the "Gibson Girl" fashion) is represented. In "His Granddaughter Discovers That He Knows The Words of The Star Spangled Banner," 1920, the fashionable clothes are as important as the figures. In this black ink and pen over pencil illustration, the figures, in wry humor respond to the singer.

Since many drawings are preliminary to another medium, it is interesting to view the drawing for the oft-reproduced "Nighthawks," 1942, by Edward Hopper. The smoky blue tones of the drawing communicate the sense of urban isolation of the well-known painting.

Adjacent to the drawing is "Nighthawks Revisited," 1980, by Red Grooms. Although Grooms has followed the major elements of the original composition, he has spoofed it by including Hopper at the counter, himself as the counter-man, as a "punk" hairdo.

ALSO FEATURED in the exhibition are Richard Diebenkorn, Philip Pearlstein, Tom Wessellmann and Mel Ramos in studies of the nude model; Stuart Davis, George Grosz, Reginald Marsh, John Sloan in glimpses of urban life; Alexander Calder, George Bellows and Alfred Leslie in depictions of acrobats, athletes and dancers; and powerful abstract figures by Philip Guston, Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, and David Smith.

Other artists represented are Will Barnet, Jack Beal, Sidney Goodman artist, Keith Haring.

As this exhibition traces the figure through the 20th century, it is apparent that man continues to be a compelling artistic subject.

The exhibition runs through December. Admission is \$3 for general adult public, \$2 for museum members, senior citizens, students (18 and over), \$1 for children.

Admission is free on Wednesdays except for guided tours.

The Toledo Museum of Art is located at 2445 Monroe Street, Toledo.

This black ink and pen over pencil by Charles Dana Gibson titled "His Granddaughter Discovers that he Knows the Words of the Star Spangled Banner" was done in the 1920s. It is 14 by 21 inches on off-white poster board.



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