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Stamp Collection

"Classical Masters" exhibit brings lithography to Ag

BY EMILY PUDEK
The Battalion

Using a porous stone as a palette, an artist carefully draws an image with a greasy wax crayon. After dampening the stone with water, an oily printing ink is then rolled over the stone.

The ink adheres only to the crayon and is repelled by the damp part of the stone. Like a stamp, the design is then pressed onto paper, canvas or other surfaces.

Two centuries ago, lithographs were created using this process. Today, artists make lithographs in an identical manner, replacing the stone with metal plates but using the wax-resistance technique to produce the desired image.

The works of two historic lithographers, Giovanni Battista Piranesi and Luigi Rossini, will be showcased in the exhibit "Classical Masters" at the J. Wayne Stark Galleries Sept. 2-Oct. 17.

Cathy Hastedt, curator of the University Art Collections and Exhibitions, said the exhibit will showcase lithographs of the neo-classical movement, focusing on the ancient styles of Greece and Rome.

"During the 1700 and 1800s, anything Greek or Roman was in fashion," Hastedt said. "These artists sketched Roman ruins, took things out of the view that were modern and created romanticized ideals of what Rome might really have looked like."

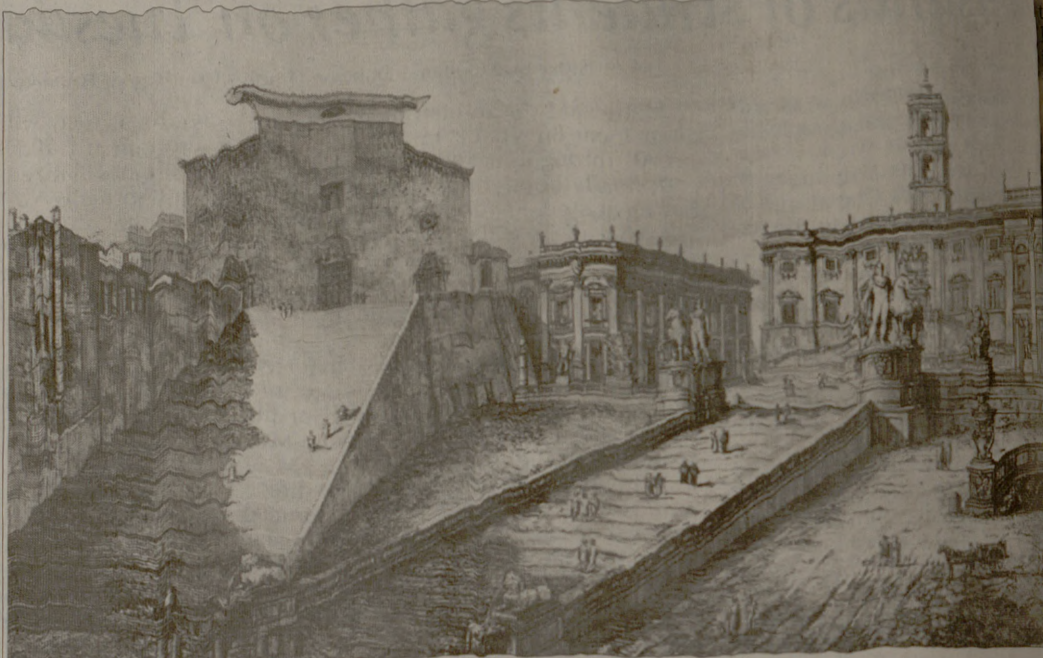
Hastedt said the classical styles of the two artists are focused on architecture. For example, the representations of Rome on display in the gallery contrast the ancient capital with the crumbling ruins of today.

According to a pamphlet released by the galleries, Piranesi (1720-1778) was trained as a draftsman at the Vatican and spent most of his life as an artist and researcher. He combined his interest in history and archaeology with the principles of light, shadow and geometric perspective to create an aesthetic representation of Roman architecture.

Piranesi's collection of etchings, titled *Carceri d'Invenzione*, or *Imaginary Prisons*, influenced the development of romanticism and surrealism.

Rossini (1790-1857) continued the classical tradition Piranesi had begun several decades earlier. After abandoning a career in architecture, he studied many of the same buildings and scenes his predecessor had etched, the pamphlet said.

Between them, the artists produced thousands of plates dedicated to the ancient city of Rome. Using lithographic techniques, their art could be produced quickly and on a large scale.



Two examples of the lithographs created by Luigi Rossini and Giovanni Piranesi on display for the J. Wayne Stark Gallery's "Classical Masters" exhibit.

"The whole print-making process made art available to the public," Hastedt said. "With lithography, Hogarth, Whistler and other artists known for their paintings were made available to the public who could not afford original works of art."

P. David Romei, executive director of the Arts Council of the Brazos Valley, said lithographs allow people to obtain a work of art by a famous artist at a very reasonable price with their original signature in ink.

"They are beautiful works that the artists have monitored through every part of their creation," Romei said.

Romei said lithographs were most popular during Piranesi's time, from 1650 to 1780.

"During the eighteenth century, before the invention of photography, people wanted recollections and visual images of their life," Romei said. "They could buy lithographs instead of photos to show their family, vacations and animals."

Lithographs are still popular today as an inexpensive way to own an original work by a famous artist, Romei said.

"In the Postwar Era, a doctor who made \$50,000 a year could not afford a \$300,000 oil [painting] by Picasso," Romei said. "But they could afford a \$2,500 lithograph. The only alternative would be to buy a cheap print, like a poster you can find in a college dorm room."

The goal of "Classical Masters"

is to educate the public about specific artists and lithography, an artistic medium, Hastedt said.

"This exhibit will help understand the interests of Piranesi and Rossini's time was vogue," Hastedt said.

Hastedt said a visit to the gallery is more than a historical process.

"It's not like seeing an art lover will appreciate the historical significance of the graphs."

The Stark Galleries, Memorial Student Center, open Tuesday through Friday 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m.

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