

MUSEUM

FALL 2017 | NUMBER 71

MAGAZINE



MUSEUM OF ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

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Mission Statement

The Museum of Art and Archaeology advances understanding of our artistic and cultural heritage through research, collection, and interpretation. We help students, scholars and the broader community to experience authentic and significant art and artifacts firsthand, and to place them in meaningful contexts. We further this mission by preserving, enhancing and providing access to the collections for the benefit of present and future generations.

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Museum Associates

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Museum of Art and Archaeology

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The magazine is published biannually by the Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri-Columbia, and is paid for through membership fees, donations, and gift contributions to Museum Associates.

Museum galleries display art and artifacts from six continents and more than five millennia. Lectures, seminars, gallery talks, and educational programs associated with permanent and temporary exhibitions provide a wide range of cultural and educational opportunities for all ages.

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Tuesday–Friday: 9am to 4pm
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Tuesday–Friday: 10am to 4pm
Saturday and Sunday: noon to 4pm
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MUSEUM STAFF OFFICE HOURS

Monday–Friday: 8am to 5pm
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CLOSED

University of Missouri Holidays and Christmas Day
through New Year's Day

Admission is FREE and open to the public
The Museum is ADA Accessible

Cover (Detail)
Simon Dinnerstein (American, b. 1943)
The Sink, 1974
Oil on board
Gift of the American Academy and Institute of Arts
and Letters, through the Childre Hassam Fund (77.6)



Missouri Arts Council

ART WORKS.

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From the Director



I've always been fascinated by the way museums communicate information about the works they exhibit. Sometimes they overload you with information, other times they leave you crying for more, or leave your most pressing questions unanswered. But one of the things I find most interesting is the different information that an individual will choose to say (or choose not to say) about a given work. This fall we'll be highlighting those choices.

The Lasting World: Simon Dinnerstein and The Fulbright Triptych follows a thirty-year arc of works by New York-based artist Simon Dinnerstein, and features his best-known work, *The Fulbright Triptych* that *New York Times* art critic Roberta Smith described as a “crackling, obsessive showboat of a painting, dreamed up during a decade when the medium supposedly teetered on the brink of death.” Organized by the Museum of Art and Archaeology, the exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue (available through the Museum Store and online), and features the July premier of a musical work by noted composer Robert Sirota, inspired by several of Dinnerstein's drawings, as well as a September scholarly symposium on Dinnerstein's works (which will later be published), and a November book club visit by Dinnerstein to discuss one of his favorite books, novelist John William's *Stoner*, set at the University of Missouri campus.

At first glance Dinnerstein's work seems based on a simple one-point perspective, but as you look closer matters become more complex—different objects in the same image may be shown in subtly different perspectives, and the converging lines communicate more than the appearance of shapes in space. Instead of offering viewers a single viewpoint—a single perspective, if you will—we asked scholars from different disciplines or with different kinds of expertise to write their own labels for Simon's works. You can follow a single person's views throughout the exhibition, or consider the contrasting views of different experts when looking at a single work. After its debut here at the Museum, the exhibition and its multiple-point perspectives will travel to additional venues in New York and Nevada.

Or come see *Courtiers, Courtesans, and Crones: Women in Japanese Prints*, the latest in our cycle of focus exhibitions showcasing eighteenth–nineteenth century Japanese woodblock prints. Here curator Alisa Carlson examines the ways that artists, carvers, printers, and publishers—all male—chose to depict women in Tokugawa-period Japan. The conventionalized roles and stereotypes of seventeenth–nineteenth century Japanese art are interpreted through the lens of contemporary feminist scholarship. During the same period we'll also present another focus exhibition, *Impressions of Modernity: Prints from 1870–1945*; featuring works by Grosz, Kollwitz, Kandinsky, Manet, and Vlaminck, among others. This exhibition examines the works of avant-garde modernist artists as printmakers. *Courtiers* will be followed by another woodblock exhibition, examining the influence of Japonisme on European art.

The Museum now offers a drop-in sketch group (third Tuesday of each month, 10-11:30am). You can join friends new and old, discover or hone your sketching talents, and explore your own perspectives on the works currently displayed.

Fall is also festival time at the Museum. In addition to signature Museum Associates events like the Crawfish Boil—art museums are sometimes pilloried as elitist or snobbish institutions, but trust me, no one can be elitist or snobbish while eating mudbugs—we will also be celebrating both National Museum Day (in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution) and International Archaeology Day (in collaboration with the Archaeological Institute of America).

Come join us! The only perspective missing is yours.

Alex W. Barker
Director

July 25–December 22, 2017

Alex W. Barker
Director



Simon Dinnerstein (American, b. 1943)
The Fulbright Triptych, 1971–1974
Oil on wood panels

On loan from the Palmer Museum of Art at the Pennsylvania State University

I was first attracted to the work of Simon Dinnerstein by things that weren't there.

Perhaps I'm drawn to forms of expression that give the promise of understanding reality from the things it leaves in its wake. After all some of the things I'm most interested in as an archaeologist, like time, are never actually found but are instead inferred from other things. In my day job I try to understand a dynamic and fleeting world, full of life and ephemeral meaning, from the lasting world it leaves behind.

The exhibition title "The Lasting World" is from an essay on Simon's work by Rudolf Arnheim, an art theorist who once argued that images don't imitate reality, they hint at it. At first glance the realism of Simon's work seems to imitate reality, but instead it playfully confounds it, offering meaning less in what is seen than what is supposed.

At first glance works like *The Sink* or *The Fulbright Triptych* are deceptive in their exactitude. Because of their painstaking realism they appear almost photographic, a passive representation of how light bounces off the objects in the picture plane. But ponder the works a bit more and their ambiguities—the fault lines along which they can be deconstructed—become more apparent.

In *The Sink*, for example, strongly-defined lines of perspective position the viewer in front of an alcove containing a small sink. A mirror above the sink reflects the room and part of a doorway, but curiously the artist (or the viewer, for that matter) does not appear in the mirror's reflection, even though the linear perspective emphasized by the doorway, walls, flooring, and the sink itself all suggest he should. The image frames and points at a figure who is absent; we find the artist not in the image itself but in the ephemeral byproducts (brushes, roller, rags, and cleaning supplies) of his work, by the things he left behind.

Consider *The Fulbright Triptych*. It seems straightforward enough—a moment in time during Simon's tenure as a Fulbright scholar studying printmaking in Germany, a triptych in which the tools of printmaking and the view through two windows occupy the central panel, while the artist, his wife and child occupy the wings. The walls are covered with postcards, mementos and



Simon Dinnerstein (American, b. 1943)
Marie Bilderl, 1971
 Charcoal and conté crayon
 On loan from the Minnesota Museum of American Art



Simon Dinnerstein (American, b. 1943)
The Sink, 1974
 Oil on board
 Gift of the American Academy and Institute of Arts
 and Letters, through the Childe Hassam Fund (77.6)

works of inspiration or influence attached to a pegboard, to all appearances what Jonathan Lethem called “a scrupulous gaze at one perfect instant.”

But of course it's nothing of the sort. The squarish casement windows open onto a world that Simone, Simon's daughter—pictured on Renée's lap—could never have seen, as she was born after the couple returned to America. It's an imaginary time, set in a space that's equally imaginary for all its apparent verisimilitude. The main image and its flanking volets are parallel to the image plane, and all three images are depicted in rigorous one point perspective. Like *The Sink*, the one point perspective gives the scene a certain timelessness. But Simon, Renée, and Simone upset this perspective, the young couple facing the viewer directly while the floorboards under their feet (floorboards based on those in a Brooklyn apartment, not the ostensible German scene depicted) sweep away at oblique angles toward that single point on the hidden horizon. The figures seem slightly out of place, temporary inhabitants of a space dominated by their tangible and timeless residue. Those figures look directly at us, but the layout of the scene focuses our gaze not immediately on them but on the point where all the other lines in the image converge. Like the figures, we know where that point must be but cannot see it, as it lies somewhere behind the ephemera tacked to the wall separating the two windows. Those ephemera define the figures at a moment in time, situating them in terms of family, friends, influences, and as the outcome of a series of constantly unfolding contingent events. They suggest the present as past-until-now, but also occlude the figures' view of that convergence point.

Throughout Simon's work there's loving attention to surfaces, from the paint splotches on mirrors to worn floorboards, from unflinching portrayals of skin—young and old—to exquisitely rendered gilt backdrops. While on the one

hand they're real surfaces, real forms (one can play 'spot the shared details' between many otherwise unrelated works) they're used less as photorealistic backgrounds than to hint at the reality Simon seeks to capture. Those backgrounds, and the ephemera that populate his pictures, seem in some ways more lasting than the figures depicted. Figures seem fragile in their mortality and in their constant states of change, likely to vanish from view as does the unseen artist of *The Sink*. The solidity of figures is greatest when they parallel the picture plane, buttressed and supported by lines of perspective (*Arnold*, for example, or *Marie Bilderl*). In other works the



Simon Dinnerstein (American, b. 1943)
Renée, 1970
 Charcoal
 On loan from Lawrence and Irene Lezak

figures seem cramped by the picture plane, trapped in a setting not of their choosing (e.g. *Renée*), passing through the picture plane rather than rooted in it, or overcoming its limitations in dreams.

In Simon's dream paintings we see a loosening of these constraints of space and linear time, as figures move through or over spaces that recede into nothingness. In his other works surroundings are defined—spaces and ephemera exist, so they're depicted in detail. Space and spatial juxtapositions become a way of hinting at time, at the constantly evolving lived experiences that cannot be easily captured in two dimensions. The images use their ostensible realism not to depict reality but to hint at it, to suggest the transient qualities of a temporal reality long in the past before the work of art

it suggested can be completed, and providing a narrative element that situates the figures as part of a story rather than a snapshot. That concern with time becomes clearer still when surveying the range of Simon's works. We see his family develop, watch stages of Renée's pregnancy and the growth of his daughter Simone, and later her own pregnancy and the growth of her family. That personal view of growth and change gives his works a poignancy that's as hard to describe as it is to evade.

Which brings us back to *The Fulbright Triptych*, to an apartment overlooking a small town in Germany, to a couple who violate the leading lines of the painting to confront the viewer. In the narrative, lasting world of the painting the figures remain forever young, forever looking back at us from a bricolage of ephemera and constructed space.

But in real life the young couple who gaze calmly back from the volets are now gone, replaced by their more mature selves further along a trajectory they could not see at the time, closer to a vanishing point in the distance obscured by their immediate surroundings, by the ephemera that remain. ■



Simon Dinnerstein (American, b. 1943)
A Dream Play, 1986
 Conté crayon, colored pencil, and pastel
 On loan from the artist

—reprinted from the exhibition catalogue, *The Lasting World: Simon Dinnerstein and the Fulbright Triptych*, 2017, available at the Museum Store or online at <https://maa.missouri.edu/?q=pubs/lasting-world-simon-dinnerstein-and-fulbright-triptych>