

MANNA

TUFT'S FEAST FOR THE SOUL

Culled from Tufts University's permanent art collection, "Manna" is a commanding, panoramic and wonderful art-feast curated by its director of galleries and collections, Amy Ingrid Schlegel.

From over 2,000 noteworthy original artworks, Schlegel selected 46 pieces that delineate an astoundingly vast range

of significant art, dating from the 15th Century to current day. And what a delectable banquet for one's artistic soul she has served up; transcending chronological order to enhance comparative reflection, Schlegel discerningly organized the artworks into three categories: Face, Body and Ground.

Facing the exhibition, one enters a well lit room with pristine white walls and is forthrightly greeted with an exquisitely detailed woodcut, "The Flight Into Egypt," 1511, by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), a German graphic artist and painter widely considered the greatest figure in Renaissance Art in Northern Europe.

The 11 1/16" by 8 1/4" "The Flight Into Egypt" is small by contemporary art standards. It speaks to a time when a young artist executing art in etching, engraving, woodcuts and paintings first had to learn the craft by acquiring an apprenticeship from other established masters.

Beyond honing craftsmanship, Dürer, like other Renaissance artists, was preoccupied, grappling with issues of perspective, ideal beauty, proportion and harmony. Within the framework of Reformation, Dürer's work was imbued with deeply felt religious feelings.

A SPIRITUAL REPAST

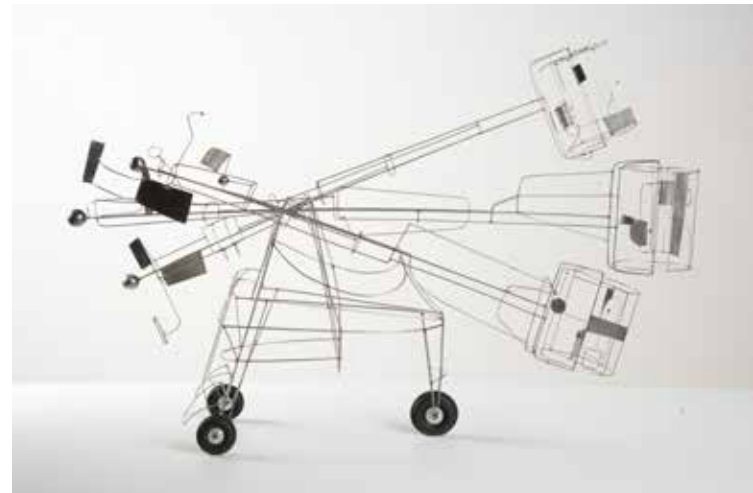
Schlegel said it was the overt religious theme of this Dürer woodcut that prompted her to title the show: "Manna," an old Hebrew word in the Bible meaning, "The edible substance supplied by God to the Israelites in the wilderness." It also means spiritual nourishment.

**MASTERWORKS
FROM THE TUFTS
UNIVERSITY
PERMANENT ART
COLLECTION**
**TUFTS UNIVERSITY
ART GALLERY**
**AIDEKMAN ARTS
CENTER**
**40 TALBOT AVENUE
MEDFORD,
MASSACHUSETTS**
**THROUGH
DECEMBER 7**

Albrecht Dürer, *The Flight into Egypt* (one of 19 cuts from the series *The Life of the Virgin*), 1511, woodcut (Photo courtesy of Steve Briggs).



Konstantin Milonadis, *Chariot*, wire and rubber (Photo courtesy of Steve Briggs).



In researching the fuller meaning of Manna, this writer found authoritative biblical sources indicating Manna carries with it a rhetorical question: "What is it?" Perhaps this exhibition, in showcasing art as it transitioned through the centuries, also poses a tantalizing question for viewers to ponder: What is Art?

Alongside Dürer's woodcut in the "Face" room are 10 other artworks: a traditional marble bust sculpture, one chromo-photograph, five gelatin silver prints, one oil painting on canvas and one on a board, a composite of 40 oil panels, and a three-monitor video captured by cellphone. It offers an astounding array of mixed-mediums harvested throughout the show.

Fast forward to the use of cutting-edge mobile-device technology while surfing the sense and sensibility of social media. American artist Nina Katchadourian utilizes a three-monitor video display to address rudimentary glimpses of her own facial expressions in moment-to-moment, mundane communications, muttering and singing as we all do with abandon as we go about our daily routines. She gazes and scowls directly at the viewer. With a headphone hung under each monitor, the viewer can hear the artist sing along to the Bee Gees' 1975 hit, "Nights on Broadway."

Katchadourian's close-up, avant-garde fine-art 2013 video "In a Room Full of Strangers" was recorded on her i-Phone. Although she makes frequent eye contact with us, she is self-absorbed, rendering the viewer an inconsequential voyeur of her exhibitionism. She is, and we all are, just digital images in a virtual world. No one needs to be self-conscious about "Selfies" posted to an abyss online, viewed by others we don't know and will never meet in life.

Continuing with a social media theme, "Obama (40 Variable Portraits)" by Canadian artist Peter Wilde, 2013, is a handsome mosaic of 40 oil paintings on 10" x 8" panels arranged in four rows of 10 images.

Each image is spawn from an original "source image," a screen-shot of President Barack Obama's presidential photographic portrait posted on Obama's Facebook page. Some of these progeny-images are



so abstract that they bear no likeness to the original image, allowing a viewer's interpretations to assess Obama as the man, the politician and the president.

Peter Wilde makes it a point to be neutral on the many heads of states portraits he profiles in his art.

NOT JUST A NUMBER

This writer's thoughts, however, recognizing that 40 is not just any number, digressed tangentially on the number of panels in the shadow of "Manna." Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days, and he led the Jewish people wandering into the desert for 40 years, the Deluge lasted 40 days and nights, etc. Obama, early in his presidency, showed such unparalleled promise in leadership that he was thought of, by some, as being messianic.

Much of the contemporary art produced serves as impetus to the viewer's individual imagination, with inquisitive thoughts erupting from the subject matter considered enriching and relevant.

One image bound to elicit strong viewer emotions freezes a fleeting moment in a way that only the camera can. Few recent-year events are permanently as etched in our collective memory as "First Light, 9/12/01," a 26" x 39" color print of Ground Zero captured by the shutter of Jim MacMillan. Dare we

even ask: "Is there haunting, evocative beauty in death?"

Inducing lively academic discussions among art viewers was a key goal for Schlegel in curating "Manna." Her placement of signature works by prominent artists including Dürer, Henry Moore, Louise Nevelson, Pablo Picasso, Auguste Rodin, James Rosenquist, Frank Stella and Andy Warhol alongside recent works by Boston and New England artists makes for an exhilarating exhibition.

Franklin W. Liu

Jim MacMillan, *First Light*, 9/12/01, 2001, color print.



F. Luis Mora, *Rosemary in Costume (The Doll Nurse)*, ca. 1926, oil on canvas (Photo courtesy of Steve Briggs).