

Sadow Birk

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Sadow Birk at SDSU Downtown Gallery

By Dominic Gialdini on November 14, 2016

SF

248 Utah Street
SF, CA 94103
+ 415 399 1439

NY

313 W 14th Street 2F
New York, NY
By appointment only

WEB

www.cclarkgallery.com



The San Diego State University Downtown Gallery, run by the School of Art and Design, presents "Sadow Birk: Depravities & Monuments," a series named after renowned, Los Angeles-based artist Sadow Birk, whose work will be on display from Nov. 17 to Jan. 9, 2017.

The featured works consist of one of Birk's major series from 2007, and creations from a subsequent ongoing series, including three new pieces that will premiere at the gallery. The exhibition's title derives from the two main series, "The Depravities of War" and "Imaginary Monuments."

A background on the series

"The Depravities of War" consists of large woodcut prints that serve as a commentary against the Iraq War. The contemporary pieces harken back to works of such artists as Jacques Callot and Francisco Goya, who in their own times made art that reproached the bloody consequences of armed conflict.

“Imaginary Monuments” is a series of drawings and etchings that depict grandiose monuments designed by Birk. These monuments memorialize anything from human rights to international football. Birk’s stylistic influence in these particular works stems from Giovanni Battista Piranesi, who made use of a related concept in his “Views of Rome.”

Internationally renowned

The exhibition is curated by professor Tina Yapelli, who had been familiar with Birk for some time and invited him to showcase his work after seeing “The Depravities of War” at a major international exhibition in Rovereto, Italy in 2015.

“I was very impressed to see his work within that context, in the company of work by many other major artists from around the world, and I was inspired to present his work at the SDSU Downtown Gallery,” Yapelli said.

Relevance and resonance

Birk’s artwork has been exhibited extensively in the Los Angeles region and in various international venues. Amidst the forefront of reasons for the amount of interest garnered in his art are the ability that Birk has to captivate viewers with his artistic choices and the relevance of what his art represents. He is able to resonate with the viewer through the giant pieces that effectively convey modern scrutiny and commentaries on topics concerning contemporary life.

“Part of the reason I was struck by his work in Italy is because he addresses difficult and controversial issues with courage and wit,” Yapelli said. “His work is very powerful, both in terms of his topical content and in terms of his mastery of the media and techniques that he employs to express his ideas.”

Upcoming events featuring Birk

In addition to the gallery’s Nov. 17 reception for Birk, there will be an opportunity to take a tour of the exhibition with the artist at noon on Dec. 2. Additionally, Birk is scheduled to give a lecture at 6 p.m. on Dec. 2 at Storm Hall West Room 011.

The gallery

The SDSU Downtown Gallery is located at 725 W. Broadway. It is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. from Thursday through Monday. All exhibitions and events are free and open to the public. For more information, visit the SDSU Downtown Gallery website.