

Sadow Birk



**Recent Acquisitions: Monument to the Constitution Includes Security Cameras**

**By Alexis Coe**

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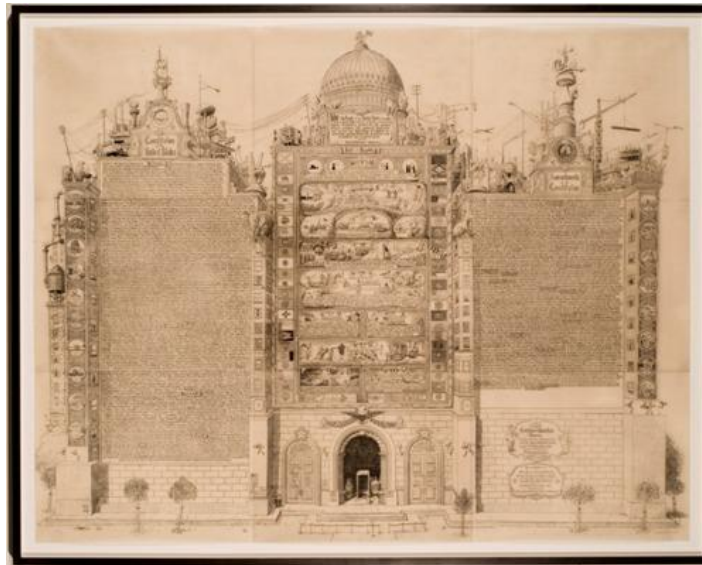
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In 2007, Los Angeles-based artist Sadow Birk was a research fellow at the Smithsonian Institution. He was afforded a small studio within the Archives of American Art, but Birk spent much of the eight weeks outside of the world's largest museum, engrossed in all that Washington, D.C. had to offer.

According to Rory Padeken of the San Jose Museum of Art, when Birk visited the National Archives, Civil War era cartoons were fresh on his mind. He had seen the Constitution of the United States before, but Padeken thinks that viewing the historical document against the contemporary backdrop of the nation's capital, replete with actors in colonial dress, enhanced the artifact.

"Birk saw the Consitution as a living document that continues to shape our contemporary life through active and ongoing interpretation and application," Padeken, a curatorial assistant, explained. Modeled after Albrecht Dürer's monumental woodblock print, The Triumphal Arch of Maximilian (1515), Birk painstakingly conceived the ink on paper drawing, Monument to the Constitution of the United States (2007). The print consists of nine sheets of paper, each measuring 12x9 inches.



**Sandow Birk / Catharine Clark Gallery**

Birk's original drawing is housed in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, but a 2012 print edition was recently donated to the museum. The Lipman Family Foundation purchased the second of 25 prints from the Catharine Clark Gallery in San Francisco. The donation amplifies the museum's other Birk holdings, which include six paintings, two works on paper, and 210 unbound lithographs.

Padeken considers Birk an exceptional draftsman, but finds this print particularly meaningful as a community resource. It not only quotes the Constitution and the Bill of Rights word-for-word, but also includes recognizable Americana, from burger joints to mailmen. Of course, security cameras and metal detectors are also a part of the contemporary American landscape.

"It reminds us of how much our world, this country, has changed since 9/11 and how that tragic day will continue to affect the way we live our lives under close scrutiny from 'big brother,'" Padeken mused. The museum hopes to make the large print available to the public as soon as possible, with an eye on the November elections.

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