

Sadow Birk

# SFGATE

Mammoth woodblock war prints at USF Gallery

By Sam W

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By appointment only

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[www.cclarkgallery.com](http://www.cclarkgallery.com)



Photo: Sadow Birk, Courtesy Catharine Clark Gallery

**IMAGE 1 OF 2**

"Invasion" (2006) from "Depravities of War"

Woodblock prints with their heavy lines make everything more bold and ominous, and you can't get bolder or more ominous than mural-size musings on the atrocities of the Iraq War.

This is the scope of "Depravities of War," an exhibition at Thacher Gallery on the hilltop at University of San Francisco. The free gallery is on the main floor of Gleeson Library.

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The exhibition is composed of 15 monumental prints, each 4 by 8 feet. The scenes are dense with military action and political content. The labor in the printmaking was so intense that it took two years and two artists to create it — painter Sandow Birk and master printer Paul Mallowney, who was trained at Crown Point Press in San Francisco.

“The idea was to do a series of prints that commented on the war in Iraq while also connecting to the history of artworks and warfare throughout the last 500 years,” says Birk.

Working at his studio in Long Beach, Birk would do a drawing the size of a place mat, then blow it up and glue it onto a sheet of birch plywood from Home Depot. Mallowney oversaw a team of artists and interns armed with carving tools who would etch the line drawing into the wood.

Completed in 2007, “Depravities of War” has been shown in Germany, Italy and Washington, D.C., with two tours to Chicago, before making its San Francisco debut at Catharine Clark Gallery, Birk’s dealer.

Ten years later, the content “seems to still be relevant,” Birk says.

*Sam Whiting is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer.*

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**“Depravities of War”:** Noon-6 p.m. daily. Through Feb. 19. University of San Francisco’s Thacher Gallery, Gleeson Library, 2130 Fulton St., S.F. (415) 422-5178.