

EXHIBIT

Day of remembrance



"Drawing # 24" (1966), Mauricio Lasansky, lead pencil, water and turpentine-based washing, and collage, 39 1/4 inches by 43 1/2 inches.

C.R. Museum of Art offers rare look at Lasansky's 'Nazi Drawings' in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day



"Drawing # 28" (1966), Mauricio Lasansky, lead pencil, water and turpentine-based washing, and collage, 45 inches by 82 inches.

By John Kenyon

CEDAR RAPIDS — The horrors depicted in Mauricio Lasansky's "Nazi Drawings" are specific, but the message they convey is both universal and topical. Lasansky, a retired University of Iowa printmaker, is best known for the prints, a collection of 30 individual pieces and one triptych that depict the atrocities carried out in Nazi Germany.

The drawings will be on display at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art beginning today in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day, the first time the collection has been seen in Cedar Rapids.

Asked about the reasons behind the drawings' continued resonance with viewers, Lasansky quickly begins talking about the war in Iraq, saying he doesn't understand it.

"We don't even try a diplomatic way; this is strictly a

political game that could be avoided," he says.

His drawings, which are stark and unsettling, convey the idea that in wartime people are reduced to animals, taught that killing is a good thing.

"(The drawings) obviously take in some deep, deep feelings about the relationship between people," he says. "I'm pleased to see that I touch the button in people."

The images, completed between 1961 and 1966, are on permanent loan to the University of Iowa Museum of Art from the Richard S. Levitt Foundation of Des Moines.

The entire exhibit has not been shown together since it was on display in the main gallery space of the UI museum in 1997. Before that, the pieces had only been seen in Iowa a handful of times, including two exhibitions in Des Moines in the 1960s and 1970s.

The "Nazi Drawings" were first exhibited in 1967 at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. They have not traveled much lately because of the difficulties associated with shipping the large prints, some of which are more than 6 feet tall.

An opening reception will be held today from 2 to 4 p.m., including a 3 p.m. talk by Phillip Lasansky, the artist's son. Mauricio Lasansky also will attend.

The younger Lasansky says his father, who turns 90 this year, is doing well, and still working every day in the studio above his gallery space at 216 E. Washington St. in downtown Iowa City.

The elder Lasansky was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1914. He came to the United States in 1943 on a Guggenheim Fellowship to study in New York. He came to the UI two years later to start a print department in the school of art and art history.

Lasansky retired from the UI in 1985. He has been recognized for his work dozens of times throughout his career. In 1999, he won the Iowa Award, the state's highest citizen award.

At that time, he said he retired because he couldn't devote his full energies to creating his own work while he was teaching.

He has, however, been productive in retirement. He has completed more than 300 prints, a full third of those in

the time since his retirement.

His prints are mostly intaglio, created by etching lines in a metal plate and then spreading ink across the plate to fill the lines. The plate and paper are run through a press, creating an image.

Many plates with several inks can be used in the creation of one print. The prints can change one to the next as different plates are used in ways, creating a series based on similar themes.

The Cedar Rapids Museum of Art holds a large collection of Lasansky's work, including more than 80 finished prints. The drawings are the subject of "The Nazi Drawings," a 25-minute documentary video by Iowa City filmmaker Lane Wyrick. UI professors David Gompper and Eric Forsythe, respectively, provided the video's music and narration.

Included is footage of Lasansky talking about the drawings, as well as an interview with historian Edwin Honig, who wrote an essay about the drawings for the exhibition catalog, and Richard Levitt, who owns the drawings.

The film will be shown on Iowa Public Television at 5:30 tonight to coincide with the opening of the exhibit. In addition, filmmaker Wyrick will participate in an "Art Sandwiched In" event at noon May 5 at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art.

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Mauricio Lasansky

Arts extra

■ **WHAT:** Mauricio Lasansky's "Nazi Drawings"

■ **WHERE:** Cedar Rapids Museum of Art

■ **WHEN:** Through Oct. 3; opening reception today from 2 to 4 p.m.

■ **ADMISSION:** Adults \$5.50, seniors \$4.50, children under 18 free



"Drawing # 14" (1966), Mauricio Lasansky, lead pencil, water and turpentine-based washing, and collage, 45 inches by 73 inches.