

# Backgrounder

## EXHIBITIONS

### **EDGAR DEGAS: Figures in Motion**

January 31-May 30, 2010

*EDGAR DEGAS: Figures in Motion* explores one of the most fascinating aspects of the work of the renowned 19th century painter and sculptor Edgar Degas. Degas' innovative compositions, skillful drawing and perceptive analysis of movement have made him one of the masters of late nineteenth-century French art, and one of the most known names in modern art history.

For Degas, sculpture was an uniquely intimate medium, able to capture the details of the human body and the nuances of the body in motion. Ballet dancers at the Paris Opera were a ready source of inspiration for Degas, and are an recurring image in his works in all media. Equally, bathers provided an even wider variety of poses and were an opportunity for the artist to explore unique moments of repose and balance.

Many of Degas' sculpted dancers, bathers, and horses can be related to similar subjects and compositions found amongst his 2-dimensional works: paintings, pastels and drawings, and are part of his ongoing study of forms and movement that appears simultaneously throughout his works. This exhibition features over 40 bronze works, augmented by paintings, drawings and prints, and is a unique look at the complex and studied gaze of this important 19th century artist.

### **Francisco Goya: The Disasters of War and Los Caprichos**

January 31-May 30, 2010

This exhibition features Francisco Goya's infamous print suites: *Los Caprichos* (1799) and *The Disasters of War* (1810-1820). Created on the eve of the close of the 18th century, *Los Caprichos* focuses on themes related to the Spanish Inquisition, the abuses of the church and the nobility, witchcraft, avarice, and represents Goya's critique of the social, cultural, religious world of the day. *The Disasters of War*, created by Goya only a decade later, documents the brutality of the Peninsular War and the atrocities that mankind inflicts upon itself. Together these two bodies of work have come to be seen as the most influential graphic series in the history of Western art.

Organized by the Art Gallery of Alberta and the National Gallery of Canada

### **Karsh: Image Maker**

January 31-May 30, 2010

*Karsh: Image Maker* is a major exhibition that marks the centenary of one of Canada's most eminent portrait photographers. The exhibition provides a fresh and dynamic approach to the work of Yousuf Karsh, a multifaceted photographer, whose life, influence and work have created an enduring legacy.

*Karsh: Image Maker* features original portraits, studio and darkroom artifacts, archival material as well as innovative interactive and hands-on experiences to build a picture of the artist that was Karsh. Using records from the extensive Karsh Fonds held by Library and Archives Canada, and artifacts from Karsh's studio held

# Backgrounder

by the Canada Science and Technology Museum, the exhibition provides insight into how Karsh created his photographs (technically, aesthetically and culturally) and how he gained such wide circulation and currency in the world of 20th century portrait photography.

*Karsh: Image Maker* considers how portraiture is a form of storytelling, and explores the contexts, myths and memories that surround Karsh's work, and how portrait photography shapes our understanding of power, fame and the construction of self.

*Organized and circulated by the National Portrait Gallery and Canada Science & Technology Museum*

## **The Murder of Crows by Janet Cardiff and Georges Bures Miller**

January 31-May 9, 2010

The AGA is proud to announce the North American premier of Janet Cardiff and George Bures Millers installation: *The Murder of Crows*, their largest sound installation to date. The work has been shown in Sydney, Berlin and Brazil, but comes to Canadian audiences for the first time as part of the AGA's opening exhibitions.

The work will occupy the entire third floor of the new Art Gallery of Alberta. Consisting of over 100 speakers, *The Murder of Crows* is a complex interweaving of voice, music and sound that have generated a profound physical impact on the listener. The work has been conceived in acts, but one whose images and narratives structures are created by sound alone. The three-part work, composed in collaboration with Freida Abtan, Tilman Ritter and Titus Maderlechner, is 30 minutes in duration.

The title of the work, *The Murder of Crows*, refers to the English term for a group of those birds and to the strange occurrence known as a 'crow funeral': when a crow dies, many other crows converge around the body and caw, perhaps in lament. Another central reference to the work is the etching *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* by Francisco de Goya from the series *Los Caprichos*, 1799. In this suite of etchings, Goya took a critical look at tyranny, ignorance and superstition. In an epoch characterized by political and social upheavals, wars and insurrections, he warned that imagination abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters.

In the installation, one hears a voice, coming from a megaphone that lies on a table at the center of the room. Like Goya's sleeping man, the speaker is a captive of their own nightmares, experiencing dreadful scenes fraught with fear and terror. Sounds and noises roam the space of the exhibition like the owls and bats that flit around the sleeper in Goya's etching. In the transition from one sound world to the next, the work's structure follows the illogical yet interrelated progressions of dreams.

In this installation, Cardiff and Miller employ and expand on the technical processes that they developed for earlier works such as "The Forty Part Motet" (2001), "The Berlin Files" (2003) and "Pandemonium" (2005).

# Backgrounder

## **STORM ROOM by Janet Cardiff and Georges Bures Miller**

January 31-May 9, 2010

In the AGA's RBC New Works Gallery, Cardiff and Miller have created a new work specifically for the opening of the new AGA building. Entitled "Storm Room", the work continues the artists' explorations into the emotive power of sound.

## **PROGRAMMING**

The Art Gallery of Alberta's opening exhibitions will be animated by newly envisioned events alongside well-established programming like the monthly **Art for Lunch** and **HSBC All Day Sundays**. Everyday, visitors to the new AGA will have the opportunity to join scheduled tours with AGA interpretative staff, take self-guided tours or engage with volunteer Exhibition Guides. Featured programming from the AGA's first season includes **CONTEMPORARY ART 101**, a course designed to demystify contemporary art led by **Deputy Director/Chief Curator Catherine Crowston**; exhibition lectures presented by prominent international scholars, thinkers and artists, as well as forums and **late night events**. The AGA will be a place where people of all ages can connect with art, artists and ideas in a welcoming and exciting atmosphere.

### **Media Contact**

Sarah Hoyles, Media Relations & Communications Coordinator  
T: 780.422.6223 E: [sarah.hoyles@youraga.ca](mailto:sarah.hoyles@youraga.ca)