

Backgrounder

For Immediate Release

Exhibition Descriptions

M.C. ESCHER: *The Mathematician* June 19, 2010–October 11, 2010

Maurits Cornelis Escher (1898–1972) is one of the world's most famous and recognized artists. Images of his work are reproduced and appreciated by millions of people around the world, yet few have a sense of the depth and details of the artist's career.

This exhibition features 54 works selected from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, and includes prints that represent the different themes and areas of study that fascinated this extraordinary artist. The works selected for the exhibition trace Escher's work from his earliest prints, works such as *Eight Heads* (1922), the first work that shows the artist's experimentations with the regular division of a planar surface, which was produced during the artist's enrollment at the School of Architecture and Ornamental Design in Haarlem, Netherlands.

After graduating in 1922, Escher traveled to Italy, eventually settling in Rome, where he remained until 1935. During these 12 years, Escher toured the Italian countryside drawing and sketching images for the prints that he would produce later in his studio at home. Mostly cross grain wood-cuts, these early works are more naturalistic representations of the Italian landscape (that are both lesser known and reproduced), with a few dream-like images such as *Castle in the Air* (1928) and *The Drowned Cathedral* (1929), that evoke the artist's later works interest in uncanny juxtapositions and architectures of the imagination.

In 1935–1936, the interest that Escher had shown in the world around him expands from a more traditional study of the physical landscape to an intense engagement with the physics of the world – of reflective surfaces, plays with perspective and illusions of depth – and with an interest in the order, symmetry and geometric logic of mathematics. The exhibition features iconic images such as *Day and Night* (1938) and *Sky and Water* (1938), as well as examples of Escher's studies of the multiple variations possible in the regular division of the plane through images representing his study of glide reflection, the metamorphosis of forms and size reduction. This can be seen in works such as *Circle Limit III* (1959) and *Circle Limit IV (Heaven and Hell)* (1960).

The exhibition also includes examples of Escher's experiments with different print-making techniques, from the introduction of lithography to his work in 1929 seen in works such as *The Bridge* (1930) and *Tropea Calabria* (1931), to one of the artist's few etchings, the mezzotint *Mummified Frog* of 1946. Finally, the exhibition includes examples of Escher's plays with impossible architectures *Relativity* (1953); *Belvedere* (1958) and *Waterfall* (1961).

Organized and circulated by the National Gallery of Canada, with the support of Capital Powered Art; an exhibition series sponsored by Capital Power Corporation.

Background

PIRANESI'S PRISONS: *Architecture of Mystery and Imagination*

June 19, 2010–November 7, 2010

In the summer of 2010, The National Gallery of Canada at the Art Gallery of Alberta features Giovanni Battista Piranesi's haunting and dramatic images from the print series, *Carceri d'invenzione (The Imaginary Prisons)*.

Freely invoking the grottoes and subterranean ruins of Rome's ancient past, fourteen copper plate etchings of Piranesi's first series were published in that city in 1749–1750 by Giovanni Bouchard as *Invenzioni Capric di Carceri*. In 1761, the artist himself published a second edition with an adjusted title and two additional plates. His mastery of the etching needle, with its fluid line and tonal effects, resulted in prints possessing a compelling atmospheric quality. The psychological atmosphere of these architectural fantasies has caught the imagination of many artists over succeeding centuries. Their menacing, exotic atmosphere inspired the 19th century Romantics, while the Surrealists of the 20th century admired their irrational portrayal of objects in space.

For this special exhibition, the AGA will be featuring the superb example of the second edition from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, complemented by a selection of 5 impressions from the first edition, demonstrating how Piranesi dramatically re-worked many of the plates between subsequent printings.

Organized and circulated by the National Gallery of Canada, with the support of Capital Powered Art; an exhibition series sponsored by Capital Power Corporation.

The Art of Warner Bros. Cartoons

June 19, 2010–October 11, 2010

Warner Bros. cartoon studio has earned both critical and popular acclaim as the producers of the finest, funniest, and most inventive animated shorts ever made. The Hollywood studio, which opened in 1930 and shut its theatrical division in 1969, developed and perfected the kind of antic, irreverent, street-smart humor that has characterized much of short-subject animation ever since. Along the way, the Warner shop won 6 Academy Awards, and created more cartoon stars than any other studio – in chronological order, Porky Pig, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd, Bugs Bunny, Tweety Bird, Pepe Le Pew, Sylvester, Yosemite Sam, Foghorn Leghorn, The Road Runner, Wile E. Coyote, Speedy Gonzales, and many others.

Since the introduction of Porky Pig in 1935, Warner Bros. Cartoons have been enormously popular. In the heyday of theatrical animation, they were voted America's most popular shorts for 16 consecutive years – from 1945 to 1960. This major exhibition features 165 drawings, paintings, animation cels and related art objects used in the making of Warner's classic cartoons. The exhibition explores seven different themes from a chronological history of the cartoon studio to the evolution of Warner's first cartoon stars, Porky Pig and Daffy Duck; and features a step-by-step breakdown of how classic cel animation was made and an in depth look at Warner's most famous creation, Bugs Bunny. The Warner writers devised stories and gags of brilliant invention, while the studio's directors executed them with masterly verve and timing. They, in turn, were supported by a cadre of gifted animators, painters, and designers. The result is a body of work that, with each new screening, seems richer and deeper, and more clearly a significant part of North American culture.

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Reframing a Nation: The Poole Donation to the Art Gallery of Alberta June 26, 2010-November 7, 2010

In Canada, the myths that surround landscape are powerful. *Reframing a Nation* explores the role that landscape plays in the construction of Canadian identity. It looks at what these myths are and how they have shaped popular perceptions of our country.

This exhibition features works from a major donation to the Gallery by the Ernest E. Poole Foundation in 1975, which today forms much of the core of the AGA's collection of historical Canadian works.

Reframing a Nation considers how works by Canadian artists such as Frederick Verner, Cornelius Krieghoff, Tom Thomson, The Group of Seven, Emily Carr and David Milne have been viewed in the past, and searches for new ways to talk about them in the present.

This exhibition includes a photographic mural by contemporary artist Maria Hupfield. Hupfield is of Anishnaabe (Ojibway) heritage, and a member of Wasauksing First Nation in Ontario. Her work focuses on land, memory, community and the power dynamics of gender.

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Public Programming

ANIMATION WEEK at you AGA: Comics, Cartoons, Graphics & More July 5-11, 2010

In celebration of the exhibition *The Art of Warner Bros. Cartoons*, it's all about animation this week at the AGA! Films, talks, workshops and more...

Tuesday, July 6, 7 pm

Film: The Golden Age of Looney Toons

Wednesday, July 7, 7 pm

Film: Best of Bugs Bunny and Best of Daffy & Porky, 7 pm

Thursday, July 8, 7 pm

The AGA Presents Gary Panter

Friday, July 9, 7 pm

Film: Road Runner versus Wile E. Coyote

Saturday, July 10

2-5 pm: Absolute Magnitude Workshop

8 pm-2 am: Refinery: late night art party

Talks and Panels

The AGA Presents: Gary Panter

Artist Talk followed by a party and book launch

Thursday, July 8, 7 pm

Ledcor Theatre and City of Edmonton Terrace

\$10 / Free for AGA Members

Tickets at youraga.ca.

In celebration of all things comic and cartoon, the AGA has invited internationally renowned comic artist Gary Panter to give a talk about his work. The Emmy-award winning Panter was the head set designer for *Pee Wee's Playhouse* and the creator of the underground comic *Jimbo*. He has been credited with successfully breaking down "the barrier that separates "trash" from "art" and transform[ing] underground comix into a viable art form."

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The Warner Bros. Cartoon Film Screening and Talk with Gene Walz

Friday, September 10, 7 pm

Ledcor Theatre

Free

Reserve your ticket online at youraga.ca

Visit your AGA for an evening of classic Warner Bros. animation. Re-discover your favourite Warner Bros. cartoons at this special screening and talk hosted by Gene Walz, animation historian and Professor of Film Studies at the University of Manitoba.

Art for Lunch

Third Thursday of every month, 12:10-12:50 pm

Ernest C. Manning Hall

Free

Have an appetite for art? Spend your lunch hour at these casual and informative discussions about AGA exhibitions. Bring your own lunch or buy one at the AGA.

Curator's Introductions

Catherine Crowston on *M.C. ESCHER: The Mathemagician*

Friday, June 18, 6:30 pm

Ledcor Theatre

Free, Limited seating

Reserve your ticket online at youraga.ca

Films, Performance & More

Refinery

Saturday, July 10, 8 pm-2 am

Late Night Art Party, 18+

\$45

10% off for AGA Members / 50% off for AGA Ultra and Curator's Circle Members

Tickets at youraga.ca

Themed around the exhibition *The Art of Warner Bros. Cartoons* with performances and projects by some of Alberta's hottest young artists, this party will be the first in a new series of late night events at the AGA.

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Films

All film screenings at the AGA take place in the Ledcor Theatre on the lower level
Free admission

Presented as part of ANIMATION WEEK at your AGA

The Golden Age of Looney Toons
Tuesday, July 6, 7 pm

Best of Bugs Bunny and Best of Daffy & Porky
Wednesday, July 7, 7 pm

Road Runner vs. Wile E. Coyote
Friday, July 9, 7 pm

Presented in conjunction with the exhibition *M.C. ESCHER: The Mathemagician*

Achieving the Unachievable
Friday, July 23, 7 pm

In 1956, Dutch artist Maurits C. Escher challenged the laws of perspective with Print Gallery and found himself trapped behind an impossible barrier...

This uncompleted masterpiece quickly became a puzzling enigma for both artists and scientists. Half a century later, mathematician Hendrik Lenstra took everyone by surprise by drawing a fantastic bridge between the intuition of the artist and his own, finally shattering the Infinity Barrier!

Directed by Jean Bergeron. 2007 / 52 minutes / English

Presented in conjunction with the exhibition *The Art of Warner Bros. Cartoons*

American Splendor
Friday, August 13, 7 pm

The documentary directing team of Robert Pulcini and Shari Springer Berman makes their narrative feature debut with the biographical comedy drama *American Splendor*. Harvey Pekar (Paul Giamatti) is a comic book writer inspired by the work of his friend Robert Crumb (James Urbaniak). Pekar writes his comics about the sad monotony of everyday life, based on his own life in Cleveland, OH, working as a file clerk at a veteran's hospital and spending his time reading books and listening to jazz. The filmmakers employ a combination of live-action film, video, and animation, including narration and commentary from the real-life Harvey Pekar. The screenplay was based on Pekar's comic book series *American Splendor*.

Directed by Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini. USA / 2003 / 103 minutes / English

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Family Activities

ALL DAY Sunday
Second Sunday of every month, 10 am–5 pm
Free with admission

Spend the afternoon with family and friends at the AGA's *HSBC All Day Sundays*. With programs and projects scheduled throughout the day, you can stay for a while or drop-in for a quick visit. Activities are themed around current exhibitions so there are new art adventures for people of all ages each month.

July 11 | Animated AGA

What's up doc? The Edmonton Street Performers Festival invades the AGA to help celebrate the Art of Warner Brothers! Create balloon animals and learn to cartoon with professional artists. Develop your own cartoon character and work with local musicians to bring your character to life through sound effects!

August 8 | Through the Looking Glass

Take a trip into M.C. Escher's looking glass to explore the ins and outs and ups and downs of the art and architecture at the AGA. Illustrate imaginary worlds and buildings inspired by Escher, play with perception in our drawing fun house, or take part in a giant puzzle challenge!

September 12 | AGA Animated Sunday: The Sequel

Courses & Workshops

Art-in-context

Tuesday evenings, 6 pm
\$25 / \$20 AGA Members (GST will be applied to course fees)
Limited enrolment; refreshments included in tuition

June 22 | The Visual Culture of Incarceration

In conjunction with the exhibition *PIRANESI'S PRISONS: Architecture of Mystery and Imagination*, with AGA Interpretive Staff, Dr. Merle Patchett

September 14 | Contentious Images: Canadian Visual Identity in the 19th and 20th Centuries

In conjunction with the exhibition *Reframing a Nation*, with AGA Interpretive Programs Coordinator, Dr. Liz Gomez

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Registered Studios

Absolute Magnitude Workshop

Saturday, July 10, 2-5 pm

\$15 / \$10 AGA Members

Presented as part of ANIMATION WEEK at your AGA

Spend an afternoon with the talent behind the Warner Bros published comic book: *Absolute Magnitude*. Discover the ins and outs, whys and hows from Robert Burke Richardson and Kuen Tang.

Film & Panel

Buena Vista Social Club

Thursday, June 10, 6:30-9 pm

Ledcor Theatre

Free

Register at youraga.ca

This documentary follows Ry Cooder on a trip to Cuba in search of musicians who had performed at the Buena Vista Social Club, a famous nightclub in Havana in the 1940s. It includes footage from Cuba as the musicians share stories about their lives and their love of music, along with concert footage in Amsterdam and New York City. This documentary compellingly (and joyfully!) explores the idea of recovery of creativity in old age.

Wim Wenders, Germany | USA | UK | France | Cuba. 1999/105 min/English

Organized and sponsored in part by the Arts & Humanities in Health & Medicine Program at the University of Alberta.

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General Information

Art Gallery of Alberta
2 Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
780.422.6223
info@youraga.ca
youraga.ca

Hours

Tuesday–Friday: 11 am–7 pm
Saturday & Sunday: 10 am–5 pm
Closed Mondays*
*Shop AGA and Art Rental & Sales open 10 am–5 pm on Mondays.

Admissions

AGA Members: Free*
Adults: \$12
Seniors (65+)/Students: \$8**
Children 6 and under: Free
Family (2 adults + up to 4 minors): \$26

*AGA Members must show their Member cards to enjoy free access.
**Students must present valid student ID.
Prices do not include GST.

Group Rates

Groups over 20 people will receive a 25% reduced admission rate.
(\$9 for adults or \$6 for students and seniors + GST)

Groups must pay in a single payment and pre-book their visit by calling 780.422.6223.
Guided / private tours are available for \$5 per person on top of the reduced admission rate (with the \$100 minimum).

Servus Community Access Nights at the AGA

Free admission to the AGA on the last Thursday of every month from 6–9 pm
Made possible with the support of Servus Credit Union

Tours

Every day exhibition and building tours with knowledgeable AGA Interpretive Staff are offered free with admission. Visit youraga.ca for a detailed schedule.

Tours for Tots is offered every Wednesday morning, and Family Fun Tours on every All Day Sunday. Visit youraga.ca for a detailed schedule.

Private tours for groups both large and small are also available. To book a tour, please contact Liz Gomez, Interpretive Programs Coordinator, from Monday to Friday 9 am–5 pm at 780.392.2486 or privatetours@youraga.ca.