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**A VITAL REASSESSMENT OF THE REPRODUCTIVE PRINT AND
ITS PLACE IN ART HISTORY**

***Paper Museums: The Reproductive Print in Europe, 1500–1800*
on view at the Grey Art Gallery from September 13 to December 3, 2005**

New York City, June 13, 2005—In an age when digital imagery circulates at lightning speed and the Internet allows access to museum collections from around the globe, the printing press may seem like ancient technology. Yet well before the advent of photography, a variety of print techniques revolutionized how images were reproduced and circulated in Renaissance and Baroque Europe. *Paper Museums: The Reproductive Print in Europe, 1500–1800* features over 100 prints by and/or after Dürer, Michelangelo, Raphael, Rubens, and Watteau, and includes celebrated sets after Claude Lorrain and by J.M.W. Turner, among others. On view at New York University's Grey Art Gallery from September 13 to December 3, 2005, *Paper Museums* demonstrates how the reproductive print galvanized artists and collectors, from its rise in Germany and Italy to its flourishing in the Netherlands, France, and England.

Relatively inexpensive and readily transportable, reproductive prints—that is, prints which reproduce other works of art—allowed much broader audiences to become familiar with paintings, sculptures, and other works that had previously been available to royalty, wealthy travelers, and collectors. Organized in five thematic sections, *Paper Museums* opens with an introduction to the numerous ways that prints effectively transmitted ideas and styles. Copies of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, for example, demonstrate how different artists interpreted the *maestro's* genius: Giulio di Antonio Bonasone focused on accurately reproducing the entire composition while Domenico del Barbieri accentuated Michelangelo's muscular, stylized figures. The second section, "Creativity, Authenticity, and the Copy in Early Print Culture," examines how reproductive prints played a paradoxical role in the dissemination of artistic celebrity and in understanding authenticity. Marcantonio Raimondi, for example, copied prints exactly, essentially "counterfeiting" them. Raimondi's *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, completed almost immediately after the famous engraving by Albrecht Dürer, even includes the "AD" monogram. "The Female Printmaker and the Culture of the Reproductive Print Workshop" looks at the social organization of print workshops while highlighting the substantial contributions of women printmakers. The fourth section, "Translating Stone into Paper," illustrates how reproductive prints disseminated the imagery of antiquity and contributed to the creation of a classical canon. The show concludes with "Conspicuous Imitation," which displays 18th-century English reproductive collections of works by great Italian masters, including John Baptist Jackson's spirited woodcut after a drawing by Parmigianino, *Venus and Cupid with a Bow*. In the context of the current digital revolution, this in-depth examination of the print medium's historical impact on the arts is extremely timely. Challenging assumed concepts of artistic originality and authenticity, *Paper Museums* sheds light on past perceptions of art and raises issues relevant to our contemporary cultural climate. Revealing often complex relationships between "original" works of art and "reproductions," the exhibition illuminates reproductive prints' remarkable technological and artistic inventions while offering viewers new perspectives on a previously overlooked and underappreciated body of work.

Paper Museums was organized by the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago; the Grey Art Gallery is the sole other venue for this vital exploration of the functions and beauty of reproductive prints. The show is accompanied by lavishly illustrated, 150-page catalogue with an introduction by exhibition curators Rebecca Zorach and Elizabeth Rondini, essays on the thematic sections, and entries on selected works.

Overview and History

European artisans began printing religious images in ink on paper using carved wooden blocks and metal plates by the late 14th century. Over time, artists developed and refined techniques for disseminating dense visual information of all kinds in ever more convincing ways. As engraving and etching evolved during the Renaissance, European visual culture was fundamentally altered.

The first high-quality prints to imitate paintings were made around the turn of the 16th century and were primarily copperplate engravings. By the beginning of the 18th century, artists seeking better ways to render color and tone developed new techniques. English printmakers generally specialized in mezzotint, and French artists revived the color woodcut technique before supplanting it with the more efficient medium of aquatint. A number of artists, beginning in the 1760s, developed the “crayon manner,” also known as “chalk manner,” for rendering imitations of pastel, crayon, or chalk drawings. In the 19th century, the Romantic-era connoisseur Adam von Bartsch used the word “reproductive” to denigrate prints that imitated other works of art; scholars are still contesting this term which reduces the printmaker’s creative contribution. Imitation, however, was enormously valued in the three centuries before Bartsch. Just as works in other media provided crucial inspiration to printmakers, so too did prints help establish the fame and reputation of numerous painters, sculptors, and architects.

With today’s ever-evolving technologies, attitudes have changed and the negative connotations of “reproduction” have begun to fade. *Paper Museums* reveals the complexities of reproductive prints, reexamining the impact of prints based on other images. The earliest examples date from the beginning of the 16th century and the latest from the first decades of the 19th century, at the threshold of the lithographic and photographic revolutions that radically transformed reproductive technologies.

Paper Museums is curated by Rebecca Zorach, University of Chicago Assistant Professor of Art History and Elizabeth Rodini, Johns Hopkins University Lecturer in the History of Art and former Smart Museum Mellon Projects Curator. The exhibition is generously supported in part by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the Rhoades Foundation, and the Adelyn Russell Bogert Endowment Fund of the Franke Institute for the Humanities, University of Chicago. Smart Museum exhibitions are also generously supported by Tom and Janis McCormick and the Kanter Family Foundation and Nuveen Investments. The presentation of *Paper Museums* at the Grey Art Gallery is made possible in part by the Abby Weed Grey Trust. Public programs are supported by the Grey’s Inter/National Council.

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Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays: 11 am – 6 pm

OPEN LATE Wednesdays: 11 am – 8 pm

Saturdays: 11 am – 5 pm

Closed Sundays, Mondays, and major holidays