

PRESS RELEASE

‘Envisioning Evil: “The Nazi Drawings” by Mauricio Lasansky’ opens this fall at the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Fifty years after their debut, Mauricio Lasansky’s drawings—his monumental, profoundly moving response to the Holocaust—will appear in the Twin Cities in their entirety.



Mauricio Lasansky, *Triptych*, 1963–71, “The Nazi Drawings,” Levitt Foundation © Lasansky Corporation

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MINNEAPOLIS—August 2021—The [Minneapolis Institute of Art](#) (Mia) presents “Envisioning Evil: ‘The Nazi Drawings’ by Mauricio Lasansky,” comprising 33 large-scale drawings confronting the horrors of the Holocaust, from October 16, 2021, through June 26, 2022. The Argentina-born Lasansky created the series largely in the 1960s, as the televised trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann awakened the world to the depths of Nazi atrocities. Lasansky’s haunting interpretations reflect his response to the unfolding details. “I was full of hate, poison, and I wanted to spit it out,” he said.

Internationally renowned as a printmaker, Lasansky (1914–2012) unleashed his brilliant draftsmanship in his self-titled series, “The Nazi Drawings.” He wielded pencil and charcoal so forcefully that several sheets are embossed with the plywood he drew on. Nazis appear in skull helmets or as skeletal beasts, attacking, torturing, or devouring their victims. Depraved creatures engage in sexual acts among the carnage. Infants scream alone in terror. On several sheets Lasansky stenciled the number “5,602,715,” one contemporary estimate of how many Jews the Nazis murdered. A self-portrait ends the series representing the artist mutilated and besieged by a beast—seeming to address the role of art to expose evil in the world, no matter the price. When the first 30 drawings appeared at New York’s Whitney Museum of American Art in 1967, visitors lined up around the block to enter. By the time that show completed its nine-city tour, Lasansky was finishing the formidable *Triptych*, which became the series’ culminating work.

Lasansky was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the son of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania. Coming of age in Argentina in the 1930s and ‘40s, he made work that was deeply concerned with political protest and social justice. Winning a succession of Guggenheim Foundation Fellowships, he settled in the United States in 1943. He spent 65 years in Iowa City, where, as a revered professor at the University of Iowa, he had a pioneering influence on American printmaking.

The Mia exhibition, organized by Rachel McGarry, PhD, associate curator at Mia, represents the first public showing of “The Nazi Drawings” since undergoing a major conservation. Presented in the Target Wing

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galleries, the show will also feature a selection of prints by Lasansky, as well as footage of the 1961 Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, which included testimonies of Holocaust survivors.

“The 1960s represents a seismic shift in understanding the Nazi genocide of the Jewish people,” McGarry said. “American news coverage of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps in 1945 shockingly underreported the Jewish dimension of the tragedy. Very gradually the scope and horror of the so-called “Final Solution” came to light. Memoirs, court cases, memorials, artworks—including Mauricio Lasansky’s immensely impactful ‘Nazi Drawings’—literature, theater, film, and even television played a critical role in confronting the Holocaust so that it would never be forgotten.”



Left: Mauricio Lasansky, No. 24, 1961–66, “The Nazi Drawings,” Levitt Foundation © Lasansky Corporation



Right: Mauricio Lasansky, No. 5, 1961–66, “The Nazi Drawings,” Levitt Foundation © Lasansky Corporation

“The Minneapolis Institute of Art is honored to present Mauricio Lasansky’s commanding series ‘The Nazi Drawings,’” said Katherine Crawford Luber, PhD, Niviv and Duncan MacMillan Director and President of the Minneapolis Institute of Art. “We are grateful to the Levitt Foundation, created by Richard and Jeanne Levitt, which has taken great care to safeguard and preserve the series and has graciously loaned ‘The Nazi Drawings’ in its entirety.” The Levitts were friends and patrons of the artist and, by acquiring the works, they fulfilled his wish to keep the series intact.

Accompanying the exhibition is a 160-page catalogue written by curator Rachel McGarry, with an essay by Rabbi Barry D. Cytron. In addition to exploring Lasansky’s career, it reveals new insights into the drawings’ recurring themes, including concentration camp brothels, the merciless treatment of children, and the Church’s refusal to denounce the annihilation of Europe’s Jews. The catalogue also examines the Eichmann trial and the reception of the Holocaust in America, Europe, and Israel immediately after World War II and following the trial. The text also discusses the role of art, literature, and popular media in bringing the genocide into public discourse. Published by the Minneapolis Institute of Art and distributed by the University of Minnesota Press.

After its Twin Cities run, “Envisioning Evil: ‘The Nazi Drawings’ by Mauricio Lasansky” travels to the Baker Museum, Artis—Naples (Florida).

“Envisioning Evil: ‘The Nazi Drawings’ by Mauricio Lasansky” is organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Art and lent by The Levitt Foundation.

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About the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Home to more than 90,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest art collections in the country—from all corners of the globe, and from ancient to contemporary—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

Museum Hours

Thursday-Sunday

10am–5pm

Monday-Wednesday

Closed

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