

## Tamara Browning: Gallery displays rarely seen art of critic, philosopher

THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted Sep 03, 2009 @ 12:00 AM

The stunningly stark woodcut print "**DEAD MAN, BLACK BIRD**" displayed at the University of Illinois Springfield's Visual Arts Gallery seems to bring to life artist **ARTHUR C. DANTO**'s preference for the black-and-white woodcut.

A world-renowned author, philosopher and artist, Danto used that art form to permit the "directest" statement with the greatest economy of means.

"Dead Man, Black Bird" (1961) offers Danto's view of a crow and man as "almost lovers."

"That was based on reading I did about the Thirty Years War," says Danto, who lives in New York City.

"**ARTHUR C. DANTO: PRINTS**" will be displayed from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays through Sept. 23 at the arts gallery.

A closing reception will be held from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Sept. 23 and will feature a presentation by Danto, who is the Johnsonian Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Columbia University.

Danto's woodcuts haven't been exhibited as a group since 1960.

"He kind of put down doing art, and he's primarily been a critic and philosopher. He's concentrated on the writing end of it," says **KEN PEASE**, the gallery's preparator.

Danto grew up in Detroit, where the museum has a collection of early modern German Expressionist work.

"I fell in love with the woodcuts by artists like Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. I responded to the emotion and to the directness. I also loved the idea of working in a medium that really went back to the Middle Ages," Danto says.

A World War II veteran, Danto "fell in with some of the artists in Detroit" and did a few shows — enough to motivate him to move to New York.

"I enrolled as a graduate student in philosophy, which left me a lot of time to be an artist," says Danto, a former art critic for The Nation magazine. "Prints were in vogue, and I found galleries willing to show my work."

The woodblock prints exhibited at UIS were made in the 1950s and 1960s.

Danto gave up doing woodcuts in the early 1960s after he found a gift for philosophy and wanted to contribute to that.

Danto has written several books, including "Nietzsche as Philosopher," "Connections to the World: The Basic Concepts of Philosophy," "Embodied Meanings: Critical Essays and Aesthetic Meditations" and "Encounters and Reflections: Art in the Historical Present," a collection of art criticism that won the National Book Critics Circle Prize for Criticism in 1990.

Danto credits **EWA BOGUSZ-BOLTUC**, a local philosopher, for having seen his artwork online and being fascinated by it enough to bring it to UIS.

"She had no idea I had been an artist. She resolved to get my work shown. I was thrilled that the UIS was willing to show it," Danto says.

### BULLETIN BOARD

• Five men incarcerated at Danville Correctional Center will show their artwork during an exhibition through Sept. 24 at Becker Library Gallery, Benedictine University at Springfield, 1500 N. Fifth St.

The "**ARTISTS OF DANVILLE**" exhibition will feature the art of **MICHAEL LOUIS BOONE**, **LARRY BRENT**, **CHRISTOPHER GARNER**, **JOSE GONZALEZ** and **WELDON B. MAY**.

*Tamara Browning is a columnist and feature writer for The State Journal-Register. She can be reached at 788-1534 or at [tamara.browning@sj-r.com](mailto:tamara.browning@sj-r.com).*