

# *Burton Selects*

FROM LACMA'S COLLECTION



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## HORROR AND HUMOR

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**F**ROM CHILDHOOD TO THE PRESENT DAY, Tim Burton has expressed himself through drawing. For him, sketching is an activity concurrent with seeing and thinking—the conduit of imagination. In his allegiance to draftsmanship, Burton is part of a distinguished tradition. Since the early Renaissance, drawings have been considered to be especially revealing of the artist's individual genius and style. Prints, by extension, can distill the hand-drawn line to its essence and reproduce it for mass distribution. Long before film emerged as the leading mass-culture medium, printmaking was a primary means of disseminating ideas widely and democratically.

Certain periods of art history have especially strong resonance with Burton's vision. For example, Mannerist artists of the mid-sixteenth century reacted against the tradition and orderly grace of the Renaissance with exaggerated, stylized figural concoctions. At the turn of the twentieth century, Symbolists created hallucinatory worlds filled with out-sized eyeballs and insects.

Japanese art has traditionally featured ghosts and demons to represent irrationality, while in Mexican culture the skeleton has both spiritual and political significance. Above all, German Expressionism, which flourished in the 1920s and 30s, brought intuition and anxiety to the fore. The stark, powerful prints of the Expressionist era seem to presage the haunted interiors and emotive creatures found in Burton's feature films.

While Burton was growing up in Burbank, movies—not museums—were his preferred source of visual culture. Nonetheless, through his love of drawing and his preferred motifs—emphasis on exaggeration, distortion, and fantasy—he finds common ground with artists from many other times and places. To trace these connections, this resource brings together an idiosyncratic array of graphic works from LACMA's holdings, chosen by Burton in consultation with the curatorial staff for a related installation. Share the following images with your students and use or adapt the enclosed discussion questions to your students' diverse needs and learning styles.

## WHAT IS A PRINT?

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**A** PRINT IS A WORK OF ART MADE BY transferring an image from an original source to another surface, usually paper. Prints are created through an indirect transfer process. Most forms of printmaking involve a press by which one applies pressure to a metal plate, stone, or block, allowing the transfer of the image to the second surface. Printmaking is a way for artists to make multiples of an image.

Various printing methods including woodcut, engraving or etching, lithography, and screen printing have evolved over the long history of the medium. An artist selects the particular technique depending on the distinct visual effects that they want to produce. Below is a list of common printmaking techniques. Visit [www.moma.org/interactives/projects/2001/whatisaprint/print.html](http://www.moma.org/interactives/projects/2001/whatisaprint/print.html) to learn more about printmaking and view demonstrations of different techniques.

**Drypoint** – An intaglio process closely related to engraving. A line is scratched directly into a copper plate with a drypoint needle, which throws up a ridge of metal known as a burr on both sides of the line. The curled copper burr holds a quantity of ink, which prints as a rich smudge. The resulting lines are thicker, softer, and almost blurred in effect when compared to traditional engraving.

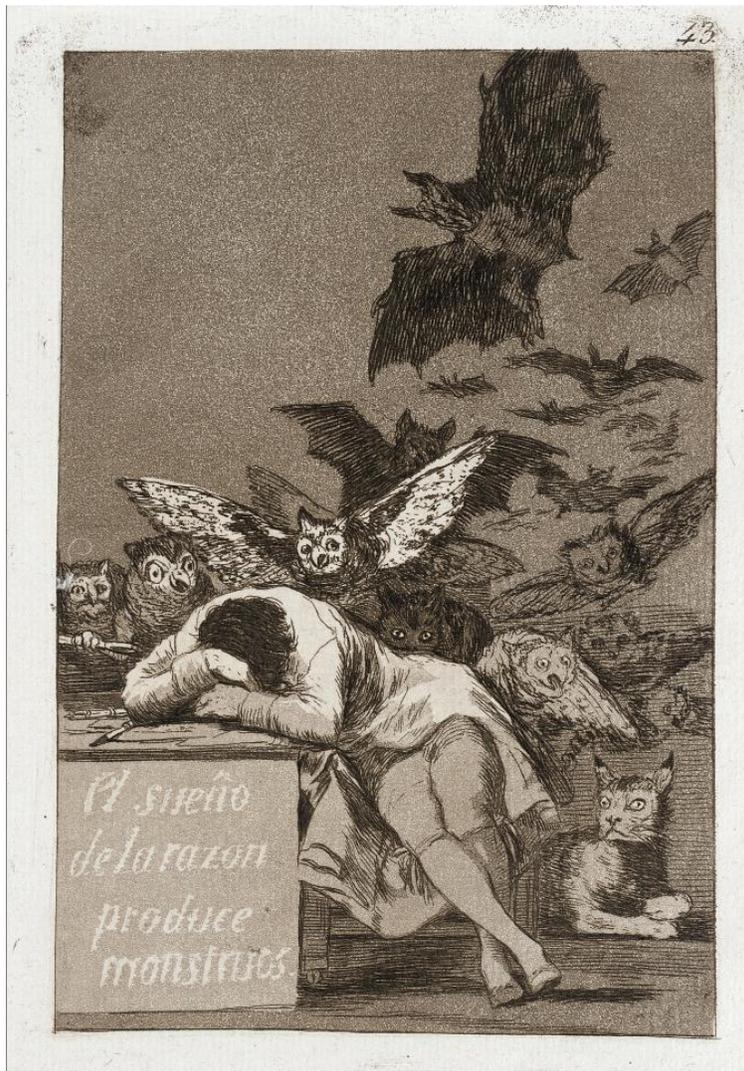
**Engraving** – A method of cutting or incising a design into metal, with a sharp tool called a burin or graver. The lines are neatly incised and then filled with ink that is transferred under high pressure to paper using a printing press. Engraving is an intaglio process.

**Etching** – related to engraving, but uses acid (rather than a burin or graver) to incise a metal plate along lines scratched into the plate's surface. A metal plate is coated with an acid-resistant film, into which the artist draws with an etching needle to create the lines to be printed. When the plate is submerged in acid, the acid bites (or corrodes) the plate in the exposed lines and areas. The longer the exposure to the acid, the darker the line when printed. Etching is an intaglio process.

**Intaglio** – An Italian word used to describe any of the various processes of cutting into a metal (usually copper) plate to create grooves or furrows, which are then filled with ink and used to print on paper.

**Lithograph** – A printing technique that uses a flat slab of limestone or a metal plate as the transfer surface. To produce a lithograph, the artist draws on the transfer surface using a greasy medium. He or she then moistens the surface with water, but as the greasy medium repels water, the water settles only on the unmarked areas. The stone or plate is then rolled with a greasy printer's ink that only adheres to the drawn marks. This inked image is transferred to paper through a printing press.

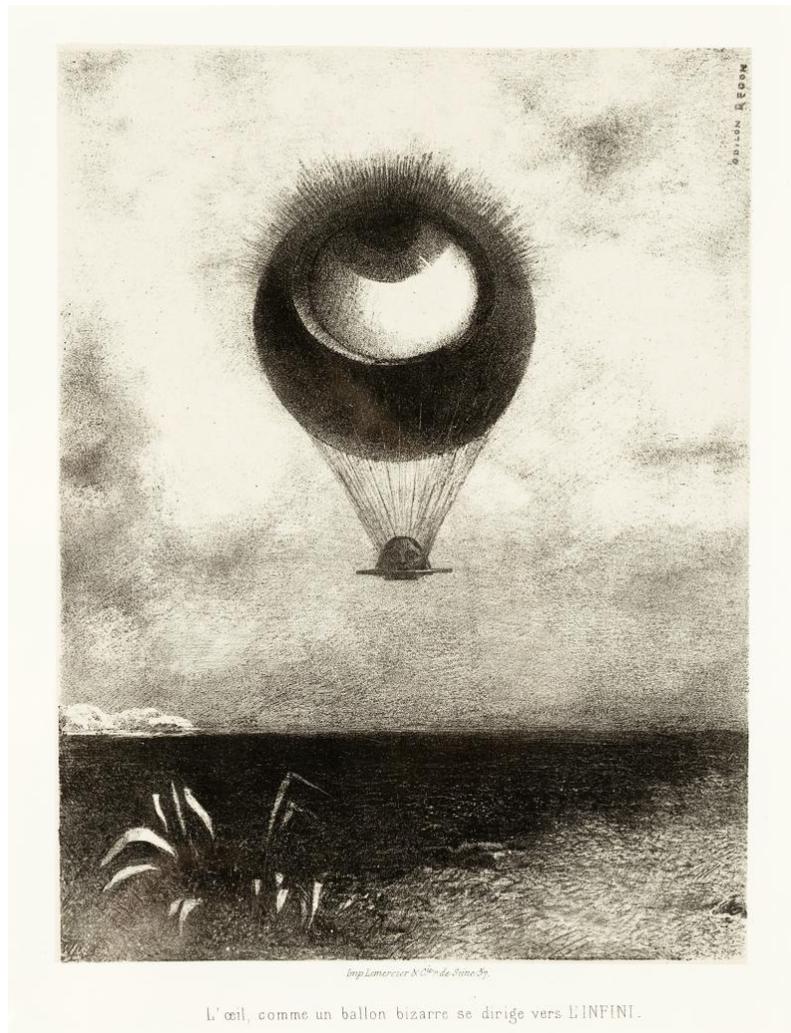
**Woodcut** – A relief printing process, in which the design is drawn directly onto the surface of a wood block, carved into the plank (as opposed to the end) grain of the wood. The parts that are to remain white on the print are cut away, leaving the black lines in relief. A woodcut can be printed by hand or with the aid of a printing press.



Francisco de Goya (Spain, 1746–1828), *Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, 1799, etching and aquatint, 8 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 5 $\frac{1}{16}$  in., Paul Rodman Mabury Trust Fund, 63.11.43. Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

THIS ETCHING WAS MADE BY SPANISH PAINTER AND PRINTMAKER FRANCISCO DE GOYA. IN THIS self-portrait, Goya imagines himself asleep amid his drawing tools with owls, bats, and other creatures surrounding him. Satirically titled *Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, the work is part of a series of etchings published by Goya.

- Make a list of all of the details that capture your attention. What artistic choices did Goya use to create a dreamlike atmosphere?
- What do you think the phrase “Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters” might mean? Does knowing the title change or alter your impression? Does the interplay of words and image add to the sense of horror and humor? If you could retitling the etching, what would you name it?



Odilon Redon (France, 1840–1916), *To Edgar Poe (The Eye, Like a Strange Balloon, Mounts Toward Infinity)*, 1882, Lithograph, 17¼ x 12¼ in., Wallis Foundation Fund in memory of Hal B. Wallis, AC1997.14.1.1 Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

FRENCH ARTIST ODILON REDON WAS KNOWN FOR TRANSFORMING THE NATURAL WORLD INTO dark visions and strange fantasies. Throughout his life, poetry and prose exerted a powerful influence on his imagination and functioned as inspiration for a number of paintings, drawings, and prints. This print was inspired by writer Edgar Alan Poe's tales of mystery and the macabre.

- Discuss the mood suggested in this lithograph. Consider the artist's use of line, shape, color, or value (a color's lightness or darkness).
- Illustrate a poem of your choice, visually capturing its theme and mood.



Félicien Victor Joseph Rops (Belgium, 1833–1898), *The Supreme Vice*, 1884, etching and aquatint, 4% x 3% in., gift of Michael G. Wilson, M.79.233.42. Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA



James Ensor (Belgium, 1860–1949), *Death Chasing the Flock of Mortals*, 1896 Etching and drypoint, 9% x 6% in., purchased with funds provided by the Judith Rothschild Foundation, Joan Palevsky, Dr. Richard A. Simms, Julius L. and Anita Zelman, Daws and Carla Waffer, and Urban S. Hirsch III, M.2003.42. © 2011 James Ensor Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / SABAM, Brussels, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

THE BIZARRE AND THE MACABRE ARE EQUALLY INTERESTING TO TIM BURTON AND TO ARTISTS IN the late nineteenth century. See the lithographs above.

- What similarities do you notice in these works? Differences? What role do the skeletons play in each composition?
- Write a story for each artwork. What details provided by the artist add to your interpretation? What details did you add to the artist’s narrative? Pair up and compare and contrast each writer’s story.



James Ensor (Belgium, 1860–1949) , *Peculiar Insects*, 1888, Drypoint, 4 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 6 in., Herbert R. Cole Collection, M.84.31.466. © 2011 James Ensor Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / SABAM, Brussels. Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

BELGIAN ARTIST JAMES ENSOR SHARED HIS TASTE FOR THE BIZARRE WITH MANY OF HIS contemporaries, among them the French symbolist Odilon Redon (see page 4), who, like Ensor, admired the American writer Edgar Allen Poe. The hybrid creatures and lively skeletons Ensor conjured up, were later echoed in the work of his successors such as the German expressionist Otto Dix (see cover).

- Hybrid creatures have served as inspiration for visual and literary artists alike, from Pablo Picasso’s *Centaur* (search for “Centaur” on [www.lacma.org](http://www.lacma.org)) to Burton’s *Edward Scissorhands*.
- Compare and contrast two differing species. Make a list of what makes each animal unique, from the habitat in which it lives to the food that it eats. Choose two to three traits from each and combine into a third, hybrid creature. Be sure to give your genetic experiment a title by naming your new species.



Utagawa Kuniyoshi (Japan, 1797–1861), *Mitsukuni and the Skeleton Spector*, mid-1840s, woodblock print triptych, sheet: 14 x 28 $\frac{3}{4}$  in., The Joan Elizabeth Tanney Bequest, M.2006.136.290a–c, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

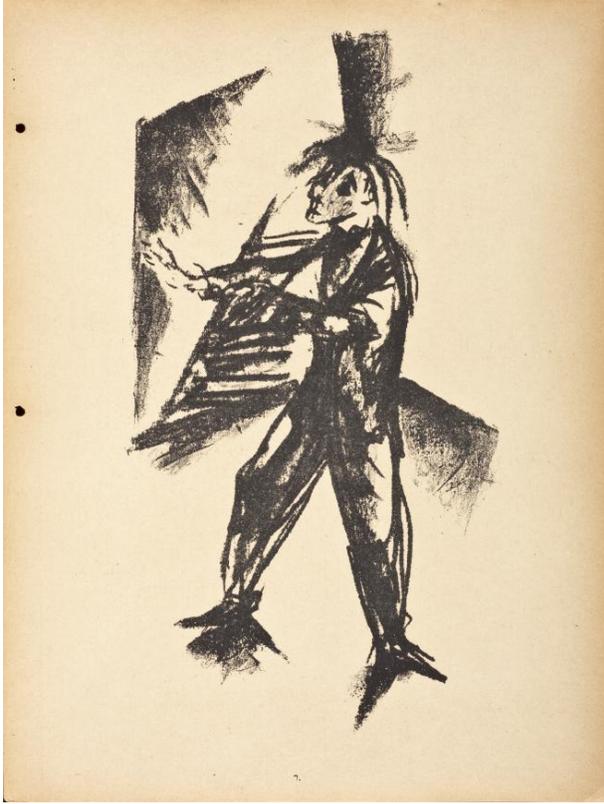
THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF A WOODBLOCK PRINT CREATED BY UTAGAWA KUNIYOSHI, ONE OF the premiere printmakers of nineteenth century Japan. Kuniyoshi developed a unique style in his prints, often spreading a scene dynamically across all three sheets of the traditional triptych format and linking the composition with one bold unifying element—in this case, the skeleton.

- A triptych is like a puzzle in that the composition is broken up into parts that can serve to define the other as you piece the overall picture back together.
- Create your own version of an everyday puzzle by drawing a scene on a sheet of poster board, making sure that the composition covers every corner of the board. Carefully dissect the composition by cutting the sheet into pieces. (If necessary, back individual sheets with cardboard to make sure they are sturdy enough to withstand play.) Test your puzzle out on a friend and see if he or she can solve it!

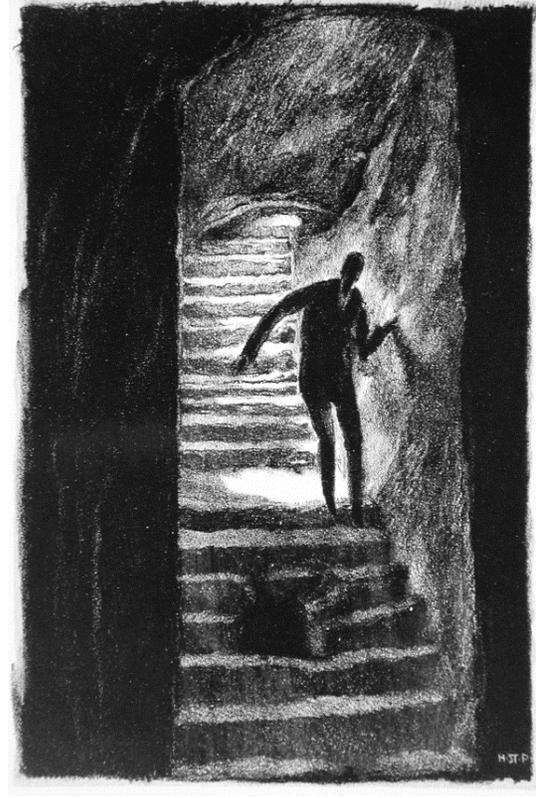


Elfriede Lohse-Wachtler (Germany, 1899–1940), *The Sleepwalker*, 1919, woodcut, sheet: 14 x 10¾ in., The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, M.82.287.40. Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

- An emphasis on line and the figure defines this composition. Compare and contrast this German woodcut with the Japanese woodcut on page 7. Note the different line qualities that the artists were able to achieve with the same printmaking technique.
- What tools do you think the artist might have used to capture these scenes in wood?



Wilhelm Kohlhoff (Germany, 1893–1971), *The Blind Man*, c. 1919, lithograph on heavy wove paper, 10 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 5 $\frac{11}{16}$  in, The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, purchased with funds provided by Anna Bing Arnold, Museum Associates Acquisition Fund, and deaccession funds, 83.1.120g, © Wilhelm Kohlhoff Estate/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/ VG-Bild Kunst, Bonn, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA



Hugo Steiner-Prag (Bohemia, now Czech Republic, 1880–1945) *The Way to Horror*, 1915–16, lithograph, The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, M.82.287.68L, © Hugo Steiner-Prag Estate, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

BURTON'S CHARACTERS AND NARRATIVES OFTEN REPRESENT THE WELL-MEANING "OUTSIDER," the misunderstood, the lonely, and the alienated, all reflections of his childhood experiences. This type of solitary experience is similarly captured in the German Expressionist lithographs above.

- Describe the figures in each artwork, paying careful attention to their body language and gestures.
- Compare and contrast these figures with the drawing of Edward Scissorhands by Tim Burton in the related resource. What is similar and different about the artist's use of line, shape, and value? How does the use of these artistic devices contribute to the individual character and its expression?



Set photographs from the film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1919, Film directed by Robert Wiene; sets designed by Herman Wear, Walter Reimann, and Walter Röhrig. Gelatin silver prints, 9<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13 in., The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, M.82.287.1a, b, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

THE FILM STILLS PICTURED ABOVE AND ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE ARE FROM THE 1919 FILM *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* which exemplifies the movement of artistic motifs across media. This story about madmen and murder, directed by Robert Wiene, is notable for its distorted reality. The sets were painted directly on flat canvas by artists Herman Wear, Walter Reimann, and Walter Röhrig.

- Describe the scenes above. Note the sharp angles, tilted walls, and curiously-shaped windows that seem to be closing in on the figure.
- Consider how the filmmaker used value, or shades of light and dark, to distort reality. Burton similarly experiments with light and dark in his drawings, sculptures, and films.



Set photographs from the film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1919, Film directed by Robert Wiene; sets designed by Herman Wear, Walter Reimann, and Walter Röhrig, Gelatin silver prints, 9<sup>5/16</sup> x 13 in., The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, M.82.287.1d, f, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

Cover Image: Otto Dix (Germany, 1891–1969), *Illusion Act*, 1922, etching with drypoint, sheet: 19 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 16 $\frac{15}{16}$  in., The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, M.82.288.50b. © Otto Dix Estate/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/ VG-Bild Kunst, Bonn, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates /LACMA

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