

JIM DINE

Exhibition Facts

Duration	8 November 2024 – 23 March 2025
Opening	7 November 6.30 pm
Venue	Tietze Galleries The ALBERTINA Museum
Curators	Klaus Albrecht Schröder Constanze Malissa
Works	37
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Opening Hours	Daily 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Except Wednesday and Friday 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.
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Jim Dine

8 November 2024 until 23 March 2025

The ALBERTINA Museum is presenting the highlights of its large collection of works by Jim Dine - a representative selection of the artist's generous donation that represents his oeuvre in a multifaceted way.

Jim Dine is often categorized as one of the pioneers of Pop Art: a misunderstanding. But anyone who, like Dine, arranged everyday objects into assemblages, no matter how much they were interwoven with his own biography, was almost inevitably assigned to Pop Art in the early 1960s. Jim Dine's early preference for "popular motifs" such as the heart, garishly colorful and loud, or the subject of the trivial bathrobe inevitably drew him into the maelstrom of this American awakening of the 1960s. Added to this was the artist's admiration for the fathers of Pop Art, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg and Claes Oldenburg: the label of Pop Art was thus to stick to Jim Dine's work for a long time, thus blocking access to its deeply subjective dimension.

Jim Dine describes himself as a drawing painter and is rightly convinced that he cannot be pigeonholed into any art genre or ism. His free and unconventional approach to the possibilities of painting, drawing and printmaking and his openness to experimentation, whether it leads to abstraction or remains connected to the representational, are an expression of his value-free encounter with the pictorial object.

The self-portrait as a revelation of the self

The large number of self-portraits is a special feature of Dine's work. Even the clarification that the artist understands the bathrobe as a self-thematization, as a self-portrait, has not prevented this group of works from being seen as merely the reproduction of the most external thing that can clothe a person.

The group of self-portraits allows for an independent, intensive and surprising dialog with the artist and his work. While Rembrandt, for example, portrays himself in his self-portraits as a drunken beggar, a nobleman, a prodigal son, a successful painter or a failed, doubting painter. Albrecht Dürer also knows the wide range between the Christological self-interpretation or the proud fiancé.

In contrast to these forefathers of the self-portrait, Jim Dine always shows the same “I”, the same face, with little emotional variation. He almost always has the same facial expression: his gaze is serious. Jim Dine does not disguise himself. He does not play roles. His self-portraits are not contributions to various stages of a long life. They are not an autobiography, a situational self-analysis, a profound study of the psyche, thoughts and feelings in a datable moment of life. Rather, Jim Dine's self-portraits are studies of that unchanging core of character that remains the same through all the ups and downs, storms, crises and joys of life. “I paint who I am, I paint what I am.” In this quote from Jim Dine, the artist declares his understanding of self-portrayal as a medium for revealing the self as it was, is and remains.

The subjective in the objectivity of everyday life

In fact, Jim Dine was always concerned with the innermost, the most subjective. For Dine, the bathrobe is an object with which he expresses his feelings. In fact, Jim Dine's work can be described as a reflection on himself. Marco Livingstone has rightly called Dine's work “a prolonged meditation on the self”. Not only is the motif of the bathrobe a placeholder for the artist himself, but the tools that have been omnipresent in his oeuvre for decades - hammer, saw, pliers - are also based on childhood memories of these strange objects. Nevertheless, for anyone who varies a bathrobe in hundreds of shapes, formats, techniques and colors, the bathrobe eventually becomes what it is: a bathrobe, an ordinary object.

The use and further development of different printing processes testify to Dine's fascination with printmaking techniques.

The artist always emphasizes the great importance of collaboration with the respective printer, not only because it represents an antithesis to solitary work in the studio, but also because creative exchange and productive implementation take place in this cooperation.

Dine experiments with a wide range of techniques and materials and thematizes youth and age, intimacy and extraversion as well as seriality and creativity on paper. His figurative motifs can be read as representatives of the artist, as an objectification of his feelings, as Dine himself explains.

The exhibition can be seen at the ALBERTINA Museum from 8 November 2024 to 23 March 2025.

Exhibition Texts

Jim Dine and the Art of Print

Jim Dine, born 1935 in Cincinnati, Ohio, is a versatile and eminent individualist in American art. He has had more than 300 solo exhibitions since the 1960s and is a multiple participant in the Venice Biennale and the Documenta. His extensive oeuvre comprises painting, sculpture, drawing, and printmaking. His works are represented in numerous renowned collections in America and Europe, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Tate Gallery, London, and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. The artist's giant sculptures also often occupy prominent spots: In the early 2000s, he created his Cleveland Venus, an eleven-meter-high bronze sculpture that was installed on top of the entrance portico of the federal courthouse in Cleveland. Since 2008, the southern Swedish town of Borås has been home to his nine-meter-high sculpture Walking to Borås—a briskly striding Pinocchio.

Jim Dine's special love for printmaking has now lasted for more than half a century. In the nearly 65 years since he created his first lithograph, he has been exploring the full range of printmaking possibilities like almost no other artist. It is his innovative approach to the traditional printing techniques—woodcut, etching and lithography—that gives his prints significance beyond their motifs.

The way Jim Dine develops these techniques is extraordinary: he works the printing plate, the woodblock, not just with a fine burin or gouge, but literally takes a chainsaw to it. The artist loves a playful approach to the printing blocks, which he keeps working and reworking and modifying in an ongoing process. He often pursues different processes in parallel and combines them on one sheet, always interested in developing new methods of treating a woodblock or printing plate so as to thus expand the range of possibilities in printmaking.

The printer has an important role in the creation of a work. For Jim Dine, as for all great printmakers, this is a partner of crucial importance.

This exhibition is based on the generous donation that Jim Dine made to the ALBERTINA Museum in 2022. It comprises 400 prints created between 1970 and 2024, many of which feature motifs familiar from his oeuvre: tools, hearts, bathrobes, birds, or the figure of Pinocchio. The collection is part of his “archive”, as the artist calls it, which he has divided up between different museums. The selection presented here once again is testimony to Jim Dine the printmaker’s passion and enthusiasm for the genre.

HEART

No other of Jim Dine's motifs has risen to such popularity as the heart. This symbol shape is the one that has appeared most frequently in his works over the decades. In Judeo-Christian culture, the heart has for centuries been understood as the organ that enables love in humans—first and foremost, the love of God. In the Middle Ages, the heart also became the seat of worldly love and passion, especially in minnesong. The pictorialization of the heart by a simple graphic symbol has also been common for a long time and can already be found in the emblem art of the 17th century. It is a long motif tradition that Jim Dine picks up on when, from the mid-1960s, he made the heart the subject of his art, relying on its visual power as a sole motif. In the 1990s, when the artist's thematic range expanded to include a number of more motifs, the heart was somewhat backgrounded in his work. However, Jim Dine would not completely abandon it: In a work of 1991, the heart even stands for the artist himself. In *The Woodcut Self*, he identifies with the blue heart not only through the title: From its center, his own wide-open eye is looking out at us.

NATURE & BIRDS

Motifs from nature and landscape appear only sporadically in Jim Dine's prints in the early years. The most extensive project in this circle of motifs was begun in 1978, when the artist created a series of nine etchings, each dedicated to a specific type of flower.

Animal pictures added to the floral and landscape motifs in the mid-1990s. The bird motif is based on a dream and childhood memory. During a visit to the zoo, a crow started speaking to the boy, its words clearly articulate to him: "Hello, my name is Jimmy." That was what his parents called him at the time. The effect of two etchings of 1994, *Owl and Raven on Cloth*, is ambivalent: One can appreciate the virtuoso drawing of these motifs—the artist used taxidermy animals as models—and admire how Jim Dine handled a chainsaw to cut the delicate structure of the feathering into the printing block for the owl woodcut. At the same time, the birds with their fixed stare also have something menacing about them: the raven brings to mind the ominous animal from Edgar Allan Poe's poem of the same title "The Raven".

PINOCCHIO

In the mid-1990s, a literary figure entered Jim Dine's work that still fascinates the artist today: Pinocchio. Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, first published as a serialized novel in 1881, tells the story of a naughty wooden puppet's long journey to goodness—to this day one of the most famous novels of development in children's literature. Often retold and made into movies, including one by Walt Disney in 1940, the wooden rascal is known worldwide. The seeds of Jim Dine's enthusiasm were already sown in his childhood. "When I was six years old, my mother took me to see the Disney Pinocchio film. It has haunted my heart forever! This talking stick became a real human after an eternity of tests given to his then wooden semblance of a soul. Geppetto and the author, Carlo Collodi, gave the boy the chance to come to consciousness and therefore join us in this valley of tears." For Dine, Pinocchio is therefore not just a sentimental memory of early childhood days, but becomes an emblem of the process of humanization as such, which, no matter the setbacks, ultimately gives hope for a good outcome. At the same time, the artist is fascinated by the literary figure of Geppetto, a kind of "outsider artist-Pygmalion", who turns a mere piece of wood into a wooden puppet that eventually becomes a boy of flesh and blood. The artist's original dream of bringing dead matter to life—even if only at a symbolic level—has lost none of its significance for Jim Dine to this day.

SELF-PORTRAIT

The exploration of his own self is a consistent thread running through Jim Dine's oeuvre. However great his interest in artistic selfreflection, though, the artist initially rejected the classic pictorial concept of the self-portrait. Instead, he established the motif of the bathrobe as a placeholder for his own self. In 1964, Jim Dine came across an advertisement for a men's bathrobe in the *New York Times*. The artist made the garment his proxy, his alter ego. Aside from this special form of artistic self-presentation, he also picked up on the pictorial tradition of self-portraiture again in the mid-1970s, which went hand in hand with a rediscovery of the human figure. From then on, the self-portrait remained a central theme in Dine's work, which manifested itself in a variety of ways over time. The apogee doubtless is the series *55 Portraits*, which he created in 1995. Ten years before that, the ongoing examination of his own self had already led to the establishing of another central pictorial motif in the artist's work: the human skull. One of his earliest works on the subject is the large-format

print *The Side View* from 1986, which goes back to an illustration in the textbook *Gray's Anatomy*: First published in the mid-19th century, it has since seen dozens of new editions and has, to this day, been the most important anatomical reference in the English-speaking world as well as a source of inspiration for many artists like, for example, Jean-Michel Basquiat.

TOOLS

Tools have fascinated Jim Dine ever since he was a little child. “At three years old, I remember sitting on the steps outside my grandfather’s garage and taking pieces of pipe, and rolling them down the stairs, just letting them go, like a Slinky toy, but it was pipe. I would just play with these objects of desire, like a hammer, or I’d grab a screwdriver and pretend to be an adult. I thought they were so beautiful. It was a non-verbal meeting.” Dine’s maternal grandfather was running a hardware and tool store at the time. His father, on the other hand, owned a store selling paint and plumbing supplies, including tools. Although Dine moved in with his grandfather at the age of 14—his mother had died two years earlier—he helped out time and again in both stores, which made an impression for life.

In the early 1960s, tools appeared not only in his paintings, but also in his graphic art, which he started discovering for himself at the time. In subsequent years, these motifs gained more and more ground in Jim Dine’s work, although he initially confined himself to three basic types: hammer, pliers, and paintbrush. Electrically powered tools did at first not find their way into his oeuvre—not even when, in the mid-1970s, he discovered the many possibilities they offered to work on printing plates—but only much later. Jim Dine’s interest in tools as motifs for his art has been almost obsessive, and has remained so until today.

Press images

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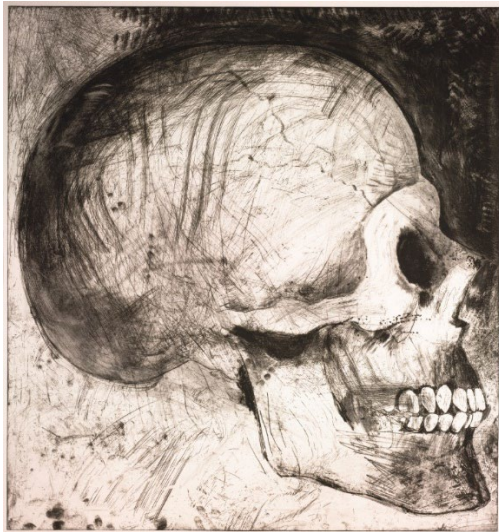
Jim Dine
Asleep with his Tools Jim Dreams, 2018
Woodcut, hand colored, five-piece
Each 185 x 70 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
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Jim Dine
A Heart At The Opera, 1983
Print on paper
130 x 95 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
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Jim Dine
B/W Robe BW proof, 2019
Woodcut
190 x 120 cm
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Jim Dine
The Side View, 1986
Etching, soft ground, drypoint
120 x 115 cm
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Jim Dine
Raven on Cloth, 1994
Drypoint etching on canvas
115 x 100 cm
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Jim Dine
Bleeding Boy, 2008
Linocut
170 x 100 cm
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Jim Dine
Untitled Tools (Portfolio of 9), 2009
Lithography on paper
60 x 45 cm
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Jim Dine
The Summer (right part), 1992
Color woodcut, in three parts
115 x 90 cm
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Jim Dine
New Pinocchio #16, 2003
Etching, handcolored, mounted on Kapa
145 x 90 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna – The ESSL
Collection
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