

THE **ECHO EFFECT** VISIT

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Explore the resounding allure of replication over the ages with some of the very artworks that have inspired Echo Effect, our new season of concerts, lectures, performances, readings, and symposia.

GALLERY 206

Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation (1596/1600)

by El Greco

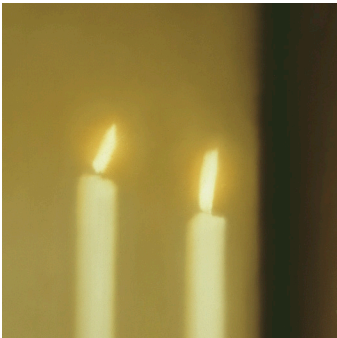


In his adopted homeland of Spain, El Greco was known as the most influential painter of Saint Francis, the founder of the Franciscan order who preached a life of poverty and humility. At least 20 versions of El Greco's Saint Francis kneeling in meditation have been identified in recent years. Since none of them are documented, scholars have debated which works are paintings by the master himself and which ones should be attributed to the artists of his workshop. The relatively small size of the composition in the Art Institute's collection leads scholars to believe it is an El Greco original that served as a model from which the artist's assistants created replicas. Find out more April 5 when conservation scientists Francesca Casadio of the Art Institute and Richard Mann of San Francisco State University decode El Greco's studio practice.

GALLERY 296

Two Candles (Zwei Kerzen) (1982)

by Gerhard Richter



Can a copy be more interesting than the original? Gerhard Richter's paintings reproduce such seemingly ordinary images as anonymous family snapshots and insignificant newspaper clippings, which are then enlarged, recomposed, and intentionally blurred. Applying the rarefied practice of oil painting to such banal source material, Richter urges a healthy skepticism of the very notion of originality. This painting of two candles—from a series of 32 similar works created between 1982 and 1983—might just as easily quote from 17th-century Dutch *vanitas* painting as a table setting in a décor magazine. It therefore seems fitting that the art-savvy rock band Sonic Youth appropriated Richter's candles on the front and back cover of their album *Daydream Nation*. Find your own musical inspiration November 13 when the Avalon String Quartet plays suites from Beethoven in response to Richter's work.

REGENSTEIN HALL

Untitled (1944)

by Kukryniksy



In the wake of Germany's surprise invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, artists and writers banded together under Moscow's TASS News Agency to produce large-scale stenciled posters for storefront windows across the country. While individually hand painted, each poster was often produced by the hundreds and disseminated across the country and around the world in the hopes of uniting both Soviet citizens and allied nations under a common war experience. This poster, made in September of 1944, depicts the flags of the Allied nations as a united force against the Nazis. By this time, U.S. forces had liberated Paris and were encroaching further into German territory. Simultaneously, the Soviet Union put pressure on Germany's Eastern Front as both sides raced to topple Berlin. Register for a symposium taking place October 15 to hear speakers discuss Moscow's TASS offensive and the use of art as a weapon.



GALLERY 155

Coin Showing Heraclius (after 613 A.D.), Roman

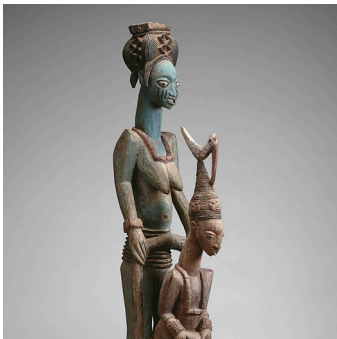
When it comes to coinage, most people like having as many copies as possible. Coin minting has been an integral part of commerce for many centuries. When the Roman Empire conquered new territory, issuing imperial currency was one way to introduce the people to their new leader. This Byzantine coin depicts Heraclius, the Roman emperor who ascended to power in 610 A.D. Heraclius, with the help of his father, Heraclius the Elder, ousted the usurper Phocas on a wave of popular dissent. While this gold solidus was printed after Heraclius was the official Roman emperor, rebels anticipating the fall of Phocas had already minted their own coins depicting Heraclius before he had even declared his intention to rule. You can hear more about the imagery of power on October 20 when Robert Nelson of Yale University delivers a keynote address for the 37th Annual Byzantine Studies Conference.



GALLERY 136

Vase of the Dancing Lords (750/800 A.D.) by Ah Maxam

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. According to Maya mythology, the gods adopted this attitude when creating us humans. The *Popol Vuh* recounts how the first humanlike beings were crafted from mud and earth, the second carved from wood; but since they were unable to venerate the gods, these early forms were destroyed. It wasn't until the gods turned to maize, or corn—the staff of life—that they were satisfied with their work and humanity as we know it came to be. Maize holds an equally esteemed position in this vessel from the Classic Maya period (250–850 A.D.), which presents three nearly identical figures dressed in the regalia of the ancient Maya maize god. Just as seed corn sprouts and eventually dies only to create new life again, the death and resurrection of this deity was the catalyst for the creation of the current Maya world. Learn more about Maya mythological beliefs when Mary Ellen Miller of Yale University speaks on March 8.



GALLERY 137

Veranda Post of Enthroned King and Senior Wife (Opo Ogoga) (1910/14) by Olowe of Ise

Among the Yoruba of central Nigeria, an individual's achievements, lineage, and personal history are sometimes recorded in song. The praise song of the early 20th-century sculptor Olowe of Ise states, “outstanding among his peers; one who carves the hard wood of the irókò tree as though it were as soft as a calabash; one who achieves fame with the proceeds of his carving.” In his work, Olowe drew on the deep roots of Yoruba artistry, passing on—or “echoing”—aesthetic traditions while developing his own distinctive style in pioneering works. This stately veranda post, created by Olowe, conveys the sacred authority of the crown. The *ogoga*, or king, is anchored by his senior wife, who stands behind him as the caretaker of the king's power-filled regalia. Learn more about the balance between innovation and tradition in Nigerian art in a lecture by Roslyn Walker of the Dallas Art Museum on October 13.

Want more of the same?

The “echo effect” resonates through the season. Check out the full list of events and performances, presented in collaboration with our season partners—the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago—on our website at www.artinstituteofchicago.org.

And, if the serial artworks of the TASS poster exhibition have you seeking more wartime history, catch *Memories of World War II: Photographs from the Archives of the Associated Press* from September 16, 2011, to January 22, 2012, at the Pritzker Military Library, right across the street from the Art Institute.