

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DAVIS MUSEUM AT WELLESLEY COLLEGE PRESENTS WORKS BY
“FATHER OF POLITICAL CARTOONS” JAMES GILLRAY



WELLESLEY, Mass. – The Davis Museum at Wellesley College presents *A Critical Eye: James Gillray and the Art of Satire*, an exhibition of approximately 15 hand-colored prints, by the British caricaturist and printmaker famous for his political and social satires during the turn of the 19th century. The pieces in the exhibition address timely issues through images filled with cutting caricatures, incisive parodies, and graphic humor. In addition to critiquing contemporary political figures and social mores, Gillray’s prints draw on ascendant art genres—such as history painting—to poke fun at the art market and bourgeois taste. The exhibition—drawn from a recent gift by bequest from Bequest of Ann Kirk Warren (Ann Haggarty, Wellesley College Class of 1950)—will be on view in the Robert and Claire Freedman Lober Viewing Alcove Gallery from September 20 through December 16, 2018.

“The genius of James Gillray’s printmaking technique and the range and depth of his historical and cultural references elevated the genre of satirical prints,” said Meredith Fluke, former Kemper Curator of Academic Exhibitions and Affairs, and curator of the

exhibition. “His masterful prints set the standard for the fascinating tension between visual image and text that endures in political art today.”

James Gillray (1756/57 - 1815)—often referred to as the “Father of the Political Cartoon”—is considered one of the most prominent and influential satirists of his time. His detailed scenes critiqued the most influential people and society of Napoleon-Age Britain. For example, in *Confederated-Coalition* (1804), Gillray presents a heroic scene in which contemporary political rivals Charles Henry Fox and William Pitt—highly caricatured at bottom left and center—join together to attack the ruling government in an epic battle. In *And Catch the Living Manners as They Rise* (1794), Gillray mocks popular fashion trends by depicting a couple of so-called “exquisites.” The woman wears a massive headdress of ostrich feathers and a dress that fully exposes her breasts, while the man wears a ridiculous vest that covers his whole body as a one-piece jumper.

Although the works in the exhibition address the political and social realities of Gillray’s time, visual satire, as a vehicle for critiquing agents of power and the foibles of the rich will resonate with contemporary audiences. *A Critical Eye: James Gillray and the Art of Satire* is presented with generous support from The Mary Tebbets Wolfe ‘54 Davis Museum Program Fund.

EXHIBITION-RELATED EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING

Fall Opening Celebration

Thursday, September 20

5:30 p.m., Collins Cinema

Artist’s Talk: *Christiane Baumgartner*

6:30 - 9 p.m., Davis Lobby
Opening Reception

6:45 p.m., Davis Lobby and Galleries
Welcome Remarks

The Davis Museum will host a reception for the opening of the Fall 2018 exhibitions—including five special installations that bring spectacular energy and creative artistic innovation to the Wellesley College campus. German artist Christiane Baumgartner will be in attendance for the debut of *Another Country*, her first major US museum solo exhibition. In addition, the second “Windows Invitational” project, featuring Associate Professor Daniela Rivera’s *Fragmentos para una historia del olvido/Fragments for a history of displacement*; *Sky Hopinka: Dislocation Blues*; *Jacob Lawrence: The Legend of John Brown*; and *A Critical Eye: James Gillray and the Art of Satire*, along with rotations that refresh the permanent collections galleries, will be on view.



Generous Support to the Davis Museum is provided by Massachusetts Cultural Council.

ABOUT THE DAVIS MUSEUM

One of the oldest and most acclaimed academic fine arts museums in the United States, the Davis Museum is a vital force in the intellectual, pedagogical, and social life of Wellesley College. It seeks to create an environment that encourages visual literacy, inspires new ideas, and fosters involvement with the arts both within the College and the larger community.

ABOUT WELLESLEY COLLEGE AND THE ARTS

The Wellesley College arts curriculum and the highly acclaimed Davis Museum are integral components of the College’s liberal arts education. Departments and programs from across the campus enliven the community with world-class programming—classical and popular music, visual arts, theatre, dance, author readings, symposia, and lectures by some of today’s leading artists and creative thinkers—most of which are free and open to the public.

Since 1875, Wellesley College has been the preeminent liberal arts college for women. Known for its intellectual rigor and its remarkable track record for the cultivation of women leaders in every arena, Wellesley—only 12 miles from Boston—is home to some 2,400 undergraduates from 49 states and 58 countries.

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Image Credit:

James Gillray, *Confederated-Coalition* (1804)

Medium, dimensions: Etching with hand coloring, image: 15 7/8 in. x 12 7/8 in. (40.3 cm x 32.7 cm); sheet: 21 1/8 in. x 16 7/16 in. (53.7 cm x 41.8 cm)

Bequest of Ann Kirk Warren (Ann Haggarty, Class of 1950)

Media Contact: Mary Agnew
617-512-7489, Magnew@wellesley.edu
High-resolution images and interviews available upon request