

Drake directs discussion on deadly sins

By Rachel Young
Collegian Writer

Artist Nate Mucha never thought he would be the topic of a professor's lecture. But on Oct. 30, Dr. Joshua Drake focused on the artwork of the junior.

The title and subject of Drake's lecture was "Allegory and Abstraction in Nate Mucha's Seven Deadly Sins."

"I was very pleased with Dr. Drake's lecture," said Mucha. "He's a gifted speaker, and his analysis was excellent."

Mucha's exhibition of fine artwork began on Oct. 16 and will continue through tomorrow.

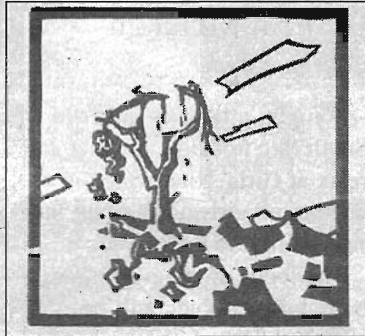
The exhibition features prints by Mucha, including "The Seven Deadly Sins" woodcut print series.

This series presents

"Desperatio" (Despair), "Iniustitia" (Injustice), "Idolatria" (Idolatry), "Mutabilitas" (Inconstancy), "Invideo" (Envy), "Stultitia" (Foolishness) and "Ira" (Wrath). "Inconstancy is a broader term that incorporates different sins of passion ... from drunkenness to fornication," Mucha explained.

Drake began with an explanation of the origin of the Seven Deadly Sins. "In the early fifth century Aurelius Prudentius wrote an allegorical poem describing the war between the seven deadly sins and the seven cardinal virtues," he said.

Since that time, artists have frequently chosen to represent the Seven Deadly Sins in a variety of mediums, both visual and literary. "In the middle ages these descriptions took the form of



muchafinearts.com

Senior Nate Mucha's "Ira."

allegory," Drake said. He then defined allegory as "the description of a subject under the guise of another subject, generally where the first subject is more conceptual and the second is more particular."

Drake examined two popular examples of the Seven Deadly Sins in art: the work of Giotto di Bondone and Mario Donizetti.

Both Giotto, an early Renaissance painter who depicted his variation of the Seven Deadly Sins in the Scrovengi chapel in Italy, and Donizetti, a neo realist or an artist who focuses on realistic depictions of particulars, used almost entirely allegory in their work on the Seven Deadly Sins.

Drake underscores two weaknesses in this type of representation. First, "any associations the viewer has with any of these particulars may threaten to encroach on a more objective view of the painting," he said. Second, in Donizetti's version of Pride, "he focuses on a particular manifestation of pride here at the expense of pride itself."

"By balancing representational allegory with formal abstraction, we may tentatively say that

[Mucha] gives us a clearer view of the Seven Sins," Drake said.

Mucha uses a stylized and abstracted tree as the principle subject, set in an abstract environment with no clear distinction between the foreground and background. Through the use of both abstraction and allegory, Mucha both limits the audience's tendency to associate a particular with their realistic understanding of it and represents the sin itself rather than one of the ways it can be seen in sinning humans.

The balance between traditional allegory and modern abstraction that is clearly evident in all the formal aspects of each of Mucha's woodblock prints informs Drake's conclusion — "He arms us well and teaches us to hate the sins which form a vanguard against us," Drake said.