

Maurits Cornelis Escher (1898 – 1972)

“From Drawing to Masterpiece”

October 10th 2008 – November 15th 2009

MUSEUM



Curators: Paul & Anna-Belinda Firos

UNDER THE AUSPICES :

- ❖ the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Athens
- ❖ the Hellenic Dutch Organization of Commerce and Industry
- ❖ the Netherlands Institute in Athens



Ambassade van het
Koninkrijk der Nederlanden



The Hellenic-
Dutch
Association
of Commerce
and Industry



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The founders of the Herakleidon Museum, Paul and Anna-Belinda Firos, in cooperation with the owner of one of the largest collections of archival material and works of M.C. Escher, are organizing and curating the exhibition **Maurits Cornelis Escher - “From Drawing to Masterpiece”**. The exhibition will be on display from October 10th 2008 until November 15th 2009.

Due to the large number of works, the exhibition consists of 4 phases that focus on various aspects of the artist's work:

- FIRST PHASE «Period of Discovery» from 10/10/08 until 11/01/09
- SECOND PHASE «Italian Period» from 17/01/09 until 18/04/09
- THIRD PHASE «Unknown Escher» from 25/04/09 until 02/08/09
- FORTH PHASE «Escher in Color» from 22/08/09 until 15/11/09

The exhibition will be the most analytic, comprehensive and extensive presentation of the artist ever to be held worldwide, giving the public the sense of being in his studio while preparing his masterpieces. The majority of the preliminary drawings, watercolors, and wooden blocks of M.C. Escher that will be exhibited will come to Greece thanks to the close collaboration of the Herakleidon Museum with the collection's owner.

The exhibition will open with the «Period of Discovery», covering the artist's work from 1937 until his death in 1972. There is a dual significance to «Discovery»: the personal discoveries that Escher made through his many studies (*Regular Division of the Plane, Impossible Worlds, Optical Illusions, etc.*) on the one hand, and the discovery of Escher and his work by the scientific community on the other.

This first phase will last until January 11th 2009 and includes about 100 exhibits, which consist of 40 popular prints, accompanied by 60 drawings / studies that preceded each masterpiece. In addition, a significant number of other preliminary drawings, which evolved into final prints will be presented in digital form via high definition video monitors.

The first phase includes the following highlights:

- a significant number of prints are being presented for the first time at the Herakleidon Museum,
- a significant number of preliminary drawings are being exhibited for the first time worldwide,
- it is the first time ever, that such a large number of preliminary drawings together with the accompanying final prints of the artist are being presented worldwide in a museum environment.

In addition to the drawings, a great number of wooden blocks will be exhibited next to the relevant woodcuts.

The Museum will publish a **special edition** catalogue in two languages (English/Greek) covering all four phases of the exhibition, with truly rare drawings and final prints.

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OCTOBER 10th 2008 – JANUARY 11th 2009

PHASE I : " PERIOD OF DISCOVERY " (1936 - 1972)

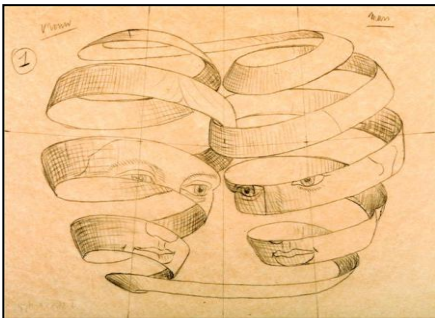
"I doubt that the public will ever understand, much less appreciate, how many gymnastics of the brain, fascinating to me, have preceded the construction of such a picture."

~M.C. Escher

In 1936 M.C. Escher took a new direction in his artistic course. This new direction had been slowly maturing during the previous years and took shape with his second visit to Spain (Alhambra and Cordova) in May and June of 1936. He was fascinated once again by the Moorish tiling and used most of his time there copying them. As he said, **"it seemed as though scales fell from my eyes"**. He immediately started to systematically experiment with filling the plane with congruent figures, what he himself called **"the regular division of the plane"**, the biggest inspiration of his life.

In 1937, with the help of his brother, a professor of Geology at the University of Leiden, Escher was introduced to research concerning Plane Symmetries and thus realized that they are directly related to his studies. He described the conclusions of Geometers and Crystallographers as an **"open gate of mathematics"** and recognized their exceptional effect on his work. As he would say: **"By their very nature, crystallographers are more interested in the way the gate is opened than in the garden that lies behind it"**.

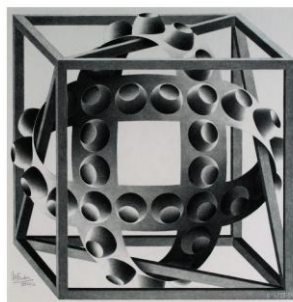
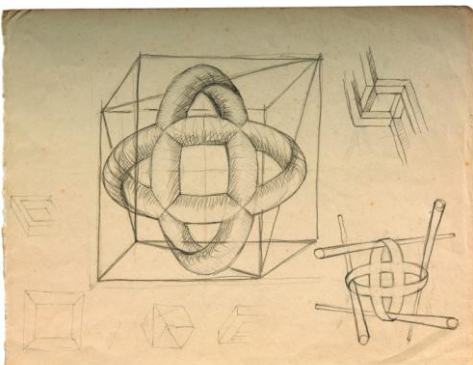
From 1937 until the winter of 1940-41, Escher developed his own theory on tessellations. He "materializes" these studies in the form of "symmetry drawings" in large sketchbooks. To this day, there are 137 symmetry drawings, numbered by the artist himself, the last of which was created in May of 1971, almost one year before his death. After 1955, Escher began to devise more elaborate methods of filling a plane, with figures constantly getting smaller, tending to a limit that remains within the optical field.



Bond of Union, 1956, lithograph

In 1958, the "kaleidoscope" of the geometer H.S.M. Coxeter gave a new and more interesting solution to Escher's quest and led him to create his most mature and important works. **"Ideas came into my mind quite unrelated to graphic art, notions which so fascinated me that I longed to communicate them to other people. This could not be achieved through words, for these thoughts were not literary ones, but mental images of a kind that can only be made comprehensible to others by presenting them as visual images"**.

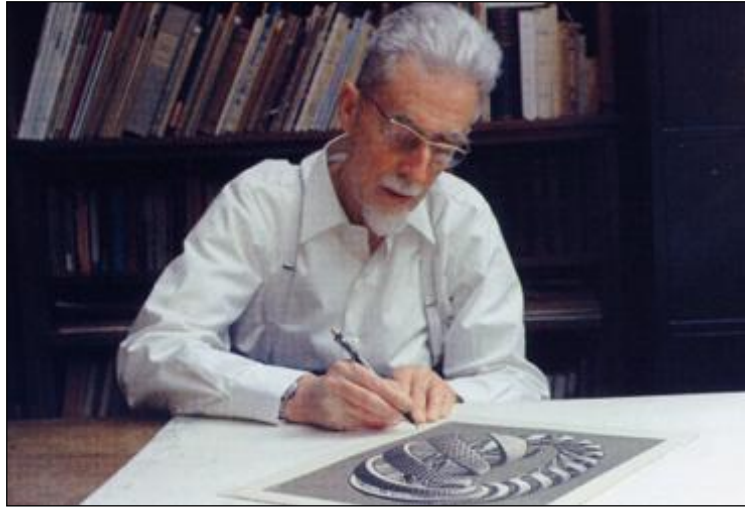
Escher belongs to the group of 20th century artists whose work, although widely published, is mostly "unknown", in the sense that it is not fully understood. His work involves ideas and techniques of modern Geometry, with which even people who work in this field on a professional basis are not familiar.



***Cube with Ribbons
1957, lithograph***

Maurits Cornelis Escher (1898 – 1972)

Biography



Maurits Cornelis Escher was born on June 17th 1898, in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands. He was raised in Arnhem and at an early age he showed his special talent for drawing. In 1919, Escher attended the Haarlem School of Architecture and Decorative Arts. He briefly studied architecture, but failed a number of subjects and switched to decorative arts. Here he studied under Samuel Jessurum de Mesquita, with whom he would remain friends for years.

In 1922, Escher traveled through Italy and Spain. He was impressed by the Italian countryside and by the Alhambra, a fourteenth-century Moorish castle in Granada, Spain. He came back to Italy regularly in the following years.

It was in Italy that he met Jetta Umiker, whom he married in 1924. The young couple settled down in Rome and stayed there until 1935, when the political climate under Mussolini became unbearable. The family next moved to Château-d'Œx, Switzerland where they remained for two years. Escher was decidedly unhappy in Switzerland, so in 1937, the family moved again, to Ukkel, a small town near Brussels, Belgium. World War II forced them to move again in January 1941, this time to Baarn, the Netherlands, where Escher lived until 1970.

Escher moved to the Rosa Spier House for the elderly in Laren in 1970, where he died on March 27, 1972, at 73 years of age.

Biographical Chronology

1898

Maurits Cornelis Escher is born on June 17 in Leenwarden, The Netherlands.

1916

First graphic work during secondary school in Arnhem.

1919–22

Attends the School for Architecture and Decorative Arts in Haarlem. Taught by S. Jessurun de Mesquita.

1921

Travels along the French Riviera and through Italy. Publication of *Flor de Pascua*, with woodcuts by Escher.

1922

Spring journey through northern Italy. Fall trip through Spain, first visit to the Alhambra.

1923

Spring in Ravello, where he meets Jetta Umiker. August 13–26 first one-man exhibition in Siena.

1924

First exhibition in Holland. Escher marries Jetta.

1925

Escher and Jetta settle in Rome.

1932

Publication of *XXIV Emblemata*, with woodcuts by Escher.

1933

Publication of *De vreeselijke avonturen van Scholastica*, also with woodcuts by Escher.

1934

Escher's lithograph *Nonza* is awarded third prize at an exhibition held at the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois.

1935

Escher family moves to Switzerland.

1936

Sea trip along the coasts of Italy and France to Spain; second visit to the Alhambra, visit to mosque in Cordoba. Turning-point in Escher's work, from landscapes to 'mental imagery.'

1937

Eschers move to Brussels due to political climate in Italy.

1941

Eschers move to Baarn in Holland.

1954

Large one-man exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam on the occasion of the International Mathematical Conference.

1955

Escher is made a Knight of the Order of Oranje Nassau.

1958

Publication of Escher's book *Regelmatige vlakverdeling* (The Regular Division of the Plane).

1959

Grafiek en tekeningen M.C. Escher (*The Graphic Work of M.C. Escher*, 1961) is published.

1960

Exhibition and lecture in Cambridge, England during an international conference of crystallographers. Sea voyage to Canada. Lecture at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

1964

Second trip to Canada, where Escher falls ill and undergoes an operation in Toronto.

1965

Escher is awarded the cultural prize of the city of Hilversum. Publication of *Symmetry Aspects of M.C. Escher's Periodic Drawings* by Professor Caroline H. MacGillavry.

1968

Retrospective exhibitions in Washington D.C. (Michelson Gallery) and The Hague (Gemeentemuseum). Escher creates his last graphic work, a woodcut.

1970

Following another major operation, Escher moves to the Rosa Spier House for the elderly in Laren.

1972

Escher dies on March 27.