

Media release  
Basel, 17 May 2022

## **Overdrawn Caricatures by Honoré Daumier**

May 24–September 11, 2022, Kunstmuseum Basel | Hauptbau  
Curator: Rahel Müller

A selection of caricatures critiquing contemporary society and politics by the French artist Honoré Daumier (1808–1879) from the collection of the Kunstmuseum Basel's Department of Prints and Drawings is on display in the museum's graphic art cabinets. The presentation illustrates the analytical acumen Daumier brought to his studies of all strata of nineteenth-century French society and events in the country's political life.

The exhibition *Overdrawn. Caricatures by Honoré Daumier* includes cynical responses to acts of parliament as well as a sendup of the women's rights activist Eugénie Niboyet (1796–1883) and a legendary anecdote from the past of King Louis-Philippe (1773–1850). The fictional swindler Robert Macaire helped Daumier take complex white-collar crimes that compounded the country's political instability and explain them in simple images. By printing the caricatures, the satirical journal *Le Charivari*, the periodical with which he had the longest-standing relationship, enabled a poorer and usually illiterate working-class audience to learn about these schemes.

Yet Parisian everyday life was no less rich a vein for Daumier to mine. Be it the vanities of artists and bourgeois, the swimming lessons taught on dry land, or the wide expressive range of the human face—Daumier trained his pencil on anything that caught his attention. His caricatures reflect a metropolis and society that tried in manifold ways to stay afloat through politically tumultuous times. His lithographs thus also provide astute insights into a period when the next revolution might break out at any moment.

Over the past several years, the Department of Prints and Drawings has subjected numerous lithographic caricatures by Daumier to scholarly review, making digital reproductions and compiling information. A considerable part of these holdings came to Basel from an eminent private collection: the American art historian and collector Carl Otto Schniewind (1900–1957) had gathered a large number of lithographs by the French caricaturist in his early years for purposes of self-study. The review revealed that many

of these are high-quality prints on thicker paper that were not clipped from periodicals but sold separately as collector's items. Other connoisseurs in Switzerland and abroad likewise built collections of Daumier's caricatures that entered the Department of Prints and Drawings around the turn of the century.

### **Images**

[www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/medien](http://www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/medien)

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