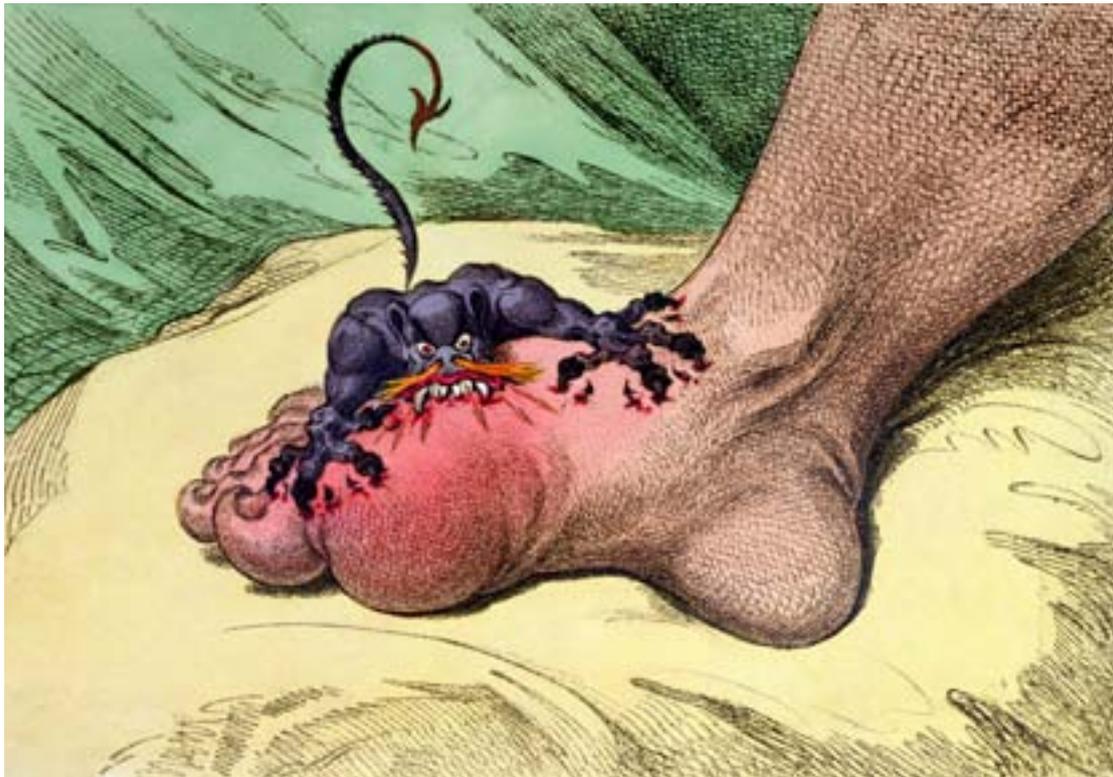


Love Bites Caricatures by James Gillray

26 March - 21 June 2015



James Gillray (1757-1815) was a celebrated social satirist, who was one of the first political cartoonists. He worked at a time of social uncertainty against the backdrop of the Napoleonic wars. In the eighteenth century, an expanding press industry provided an outlet and appetite for caricature that fed on political rivalry and nationalism.

Use the exhibition to explore themes such as:

- imagery and personification
- physiognomy
- contrasts and opposites
- love, romance and marriage
- Anglo-French relations
- the representation of people in power
- money and power

This is a charging exhibition but FREE for pre-booked school groups and for under 12s.

To book a group visit please contact the Education Department:

education.service@ashmus.ox.ac.uk

t: 01865 278015

Love, Romance and Marriage



Works to explore

Matrimonial- Harmonics, 1805 (pictured)
Harmony before Matrimony
Fashionable Jockeyship
Le Cochon et ses deux petits

Love Bites focuses on love, sex, friendship and alliances. Love is not conventional or romantic and the relationships shown are illicit and expedient. Political affiliations are often portrayed as sexual encounters. Pairs, couples and partners appear throughout his work, incorporating references from antiquity, art history, celebrity, politics and contemporary street life. Many pictures show images of friendship. Gillray's characters display public kisses, performed to seal political promises and reveal the political dimension of 'private' kisses. The clandestine sexual antics of Gillray's subjects often threaten to undermine social stability, international peace and the state of the nation.

Discuss:

- How are love and romance portrayed?
- Compare and contrast images of love before and after marriage.
- What different roles do women play in these images?

Anglo- French Relations

Napoleon is said to have declared bitterly that Gillray alone did him more damage than all the armies of Europe. Throughout the exhibition, British-French relations are personified and represented through imagery and allegorical references.

In 'French Liberty/ British Slavery' a gross and angry Englishman is contrasted with the scrawny and tattered French revolutionary. The British fear of French invasion is deflected by showing George III as Saint George rescuing Britannia from the dragon Napoleon. Another image, 'Buonaparte: 48 hours after landing!' imagines a victory scene with a cheering crowd. Buonaparte's head drips blood from a pitchfork, recalling prints of guillotined heads in revolutionary France. Gillray's 'Design for the Naval Pillar' shows an imagined victory column, created during a competition to design a naval monument. It is decorated with symbols of British victory over the French including sailors' legs and backsides peppered with gunshot.

Discuss:

- How is each nation characterised and contrasted?
- What references does Gillray draw on from allegory and architecture?



Works to explore

Britannia Victorious. Design for the Naval Pillar; 1800 (pictured)
French Liberty/British Slavery 1792
Bonaparte, 48 Hours After Landing
St George and the Dragon 1805

Money and Power

Following a run on the banks, paper money was issued in 1797 in order to protect the country's gold reserves. Gillray's caricatures show the nation's mistrust of paper money. The Prime Minister William Pitt is shown with all the nation's gold reserves in his stomach on a chamber pot, like Midas in reverse, emitting paper notes. The Bank of England is personified for the first time as the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street. Pitt forces himself upon her, distracting her with kisses as he reaches into her back pockets for the dwindling reserves of gold, ignoring the paper notes of her dress.

Discuss:

- How is money personified?
- How does Gillray expose his caricatures' attitude to money?



Works to explore

Political - Ravishment, or The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street in danger! 1797 (pictured)
The Introduction 1791
Midas, Transmuting all into gold

Politics



Works to explore

An Excrescence- A fungus, alias a toadstool on a dung-hill (Pitt) 1791 (pictured)
Doublures of Characters 1798
The Balance of Power (Pitt on a tightrope) 1791
The Twin Sisters, Castor and Pollux 1799
Opposition Coaches 1788

Powerful politicians and members of the royal family are key subjects for Gillray. Politicians are mercilessly caricatured; their faces are grafted onto the bodies of animals and objects or represented in grand scenes as gods from antiquity and folklore heroes. Opposing political parties are shown driving horse drawn coaches in opposite directions. Gillray represents Pitt as a fungus, nourished by muck and driven by ambition. In many of his caricatures their face or physiognomy reveals an inner character. This is illustrated in 'Doublures' a portrait of Whig leaders shown by Gillray as devils, drunks, gamblers and baboons.

Discuss:

- What techniques does Gillray use to ridicule and expose people in power?
- How does he use facial expressions to illustrate and define character?
- How does he merge people, images and references?