Joan Kjaer: Hello and welcome to WorldCanvass from International Programs at the University of Iowa. I'm Joan Kjaer, we're coming to you from MERGE in downtown Iowa City and thank you for joining us. I've been looking forward to tonight's conversation on the theme Art and the Face of War. We'll be focusing on two extraordinary and influential artists, Spanish painter and printmaker Francisco de Goya and Russian writer Leo Tolstoy. Although separated by time and space, the two created incomparable masterworks centered on the tragic events of the more than decade-long Napoleonic Wars in the early 19th century.

Joan Kjaer: Our guests tonight will help us see that momentous period of human struggle and suffering through Goya's shocking collection of prints called Disasters of War and Tolstoy's novel War and Peace. We'll explore not only the original works, but also film and operatic interpretations, and we'll learn about the critical work of conservationists in the preservation of delicate artworks as the centuries take their toll.

Joan Kjaer: I'd like to introduce my guests for this first segment. Joyce Tsai is just next to me and she's the chief curator of the University of Iowa's Stanley Museum of Art. Also associate professor of practice at the University of Iowa School of Art and Art History. Thank you for being here. Joyce.

Joyce Tsai: Thank you so much.

Joan Kjaer: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Next to her is Anna Barker, a visiting assistant professor in the University of Iowa department of Asian and Slavic Languages and Literatures.

Anna Barker: Thank you.

Joan Kjaer: Hi, Annie. Thank you. And at the far end, we have Denise Filios, who is the associate professor in Spanish and she's also the chair of the University of Iowa Department of Spanish and Portuguese. Thanks for being here, Denise.

Denise Filios: Thank you, Joan.

Joan Kjaer: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Really great group to talk about these things and to kick off this discussion. Let me turn to you first, Joyce, and ask you to explain why Goya and Tolstoy are connected, not only in this particular discussion, but also in some other events that are happening in exhibitions around town.

Joyce Tsai: So I was approached by Anna Barker, sitting here, and Luis Martin-Estudillo, who's in Spain right now doing significant research on Goya, I think a year or two back with this idea of linking our remarkable Goya prints with Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace. This year marks the 150th anniversary of War and Peace. And it's also significant for the Stanley Museum of Art as well. This year is the 50th anniversary and we also just broke ground. If you look at the space right next to

the library, it's dug up because we're anticipating a new space for our amazing collection.

Joyce Tsai: Part of our collection includes two first edition bound volumes of Goya's Disasters of War. And it's really unusual to have two, I mean, two complete volumes to begin with. It's even more unusual to have two first edition volumes. And when you have a book and you open it up and it's something that's used a lot for teaching ... I mean, we are a art museum embedded in a research university. We bring artworks out on a regular basis. When we have a book of these remarkable prints that describe the horrors of war in graphic detail, the book itself is vulnerable.

Joyce Tsai: And so, when Luis and Anna approached me to think through whether or not we could do an exhibit of these prints that lived in a bound volume, it seemed like a perfect opportunity to look into how we might make these prints available. The spine was already failing. And we have an amazing conservation department here at the University of Iowa. And so, we devised strategies to make each of these prints available for exhibition. These works are really significant, because of the ways in which it offers an unflinching view of the consequences of warfare.

Joyce Tsai: Both Goya and Tolstoy are referring to this moment when Napoleon is advancing all across Europe. This is the same moment where there's this whole theory of the great man in history, and both artists actively undermine that theory by the way they portray with unflinching truth and detail the consequences of the actions of great men without regard to what happens to the people who have to live their lives.

Joyce Tsai: So it was, I felt like the exhibition itself offered an amazing opportunity to tap into the wealth and the depth of the expertise of faculty on campus. It allowed us to tap the depth of expertise in our libraries. And because it's the 150th anniversary of War and Peace, it also allowed us to embed our exhibition in a whole range of events that are taking place. And I think Anna can actually speak more about the events that are taking place in October.

Anna Barker: Sure.

Joan Kjaer: Well, I wonder before we go over to Annie, would you care to say anything about the prints themselves in terms of, for one thing, the fact that they were not published during Goya's lifetime?

Joyce Tsai: Yes, absolutely. Yeah. So Goya was a court painter, which means, he was one of the most sought after portraitists. And he had a position within circles that are incredibly powerful and wealthy, who are seeking out his paintings. So he had commissions, he served the powers that be. And so Goya was a person who had standing, had access to power, and he also had substantive support.

Joyce Tsai: That also meant that when you do a commission, your ability to speak truth is constrained. So especially in this period of the Peninsular Wars that begins in 1808 and goes on all the way into 1814, and you have a series of, it's a power struggle. You go from Spanish to French, Spanish to French several times. Somehow Goya is able to hang onto his position as court painter during all of these changes. It says a lot of things about him. He's an amazing painter. He's able to say, well, you want your portrait done and you want it done well, I can do that for you. I don't really care who you are, but if you want to retain my services, I can help out.

Joyce Tsai: But it also speaks to the fact that he was incredibly canny. He knew what could be and could not be said, so to speak. And the Disasters of War, most of the prints were done during this period of conflict. They are graphic. It includes images of the French soldiers committing crimes. It also includes images of Spanish guerillas committing crimes. And this is a set of images that he made during this incredibly volatile period. And he knew that he wouldn't have an audience for it during his life.

Joyce Tsai: The other thing to think about in terms of this suite of prints is that Goya executed these works not as drawings, but as etched plates in preparation for a kind of legacy. He imagined that there was going to be a future audience, and that future audience would be best served not by singular individual images, but by a whole suite of, again, reproducible images that can spread this vision of the horrors of war, the kind of graphic consequences of ill thought-out action.

Joyce Tsai: So the prints that we have is, I think what's really remarkable about the Disasters of War is that it's an instance where an artist basically carves out their autonomy, and does so by recognizing there is neither patron nor market for the works that he's producing. And that he somehow continues to sustain a kind of output that will find a market and sustenance, that there is this kind of interesting cleft and division. Which is not to say that Goya never made large-scale paintings that were an indictment of war, but they were very controversial during his lifetime and they couldn't, they too, could not really have been shown until the 1860s.

Joan Kjaer: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Thank you so much.

Joan Kjaer: So let's go to you then, Annie, and I wonder if you can just continue on with something about this historical period. Obviously, one of the areas I know we're going to be turning to you for is the Tolstoy side of this picture and the incursions into Russia. So maybe you can just tell us something about this period of the Napoleonic Wars.

Anna Barker: Right. So the most important thing that I always tell my students is Tolstoy did not fight in the Napoleonic Wars, but he did fight a Napoleon. And it's very important to note that Tolstoy fought in the Crimean War against Napoleon III of the Second Empire. French history of the 19th century is extremely

complicated. What made Tolstoy's experience in the Crimean War so valuable is he acquired firsthand experience of what it means to be a person in a war zone. He actually starts his career as a serious writer during this period when he writes his three Sevastopol Sketches, where he describes the heroic defense of the city of Sevastopol by Russian soldiers at the time when Napoleon III of the Second Empire, along with Queen Victoria of Great Britain, allied with Turkey, in this conflagration of the 1830, sorry, 1850s in the Black Sea.

Anna Barker: Tolstoy finishes his sketch entitled Sevastopol in May with the following phrase, and I paraphrase ... The hero that I love with all my heart. The hero who always was, is and will be beautiful is truth. And Tolstoy begins this process of truth seeking, not only in his war chronicles ... and he really serves as a war correspondent, one of the first war correspondents, which makes him extremely valuable for future war correspondents, such as Ernest Hemingway. Ernest Hemingway actually considered Tolstoy's Sevastopol Sketches to be his finest accomplishment and would travel with Tolstoy's Sevastopol Sketches in his knapsack through the fronts of World War I and World War II.

Anna Barker: But what makes Tolstoy so remarkable in his approach to the Napoleonic period is the fact that he wants to tell the story truthfully to the best of his ability in fictional form. And what Joyce was saying about Goya, that Goya portrayed the great man of history, like Charles IV of Spain. He even painted a portrait of Wellington, who was hugely important in the liberation of Spain from the French troops.

Anna Barker: Tolstoy is a hereditary count. He is a part of the Russian aristocracy. He has friends and family members who are serving in the court in the 1860s, but his project is to show what happens to ordinary human beings at the time of conflagration and war. When he's describing the Battle of Austerlitz, which happened in 1805 on the first anniversary of Napoleon's coronation, he describes it from the point of view of military men, and Andrei Bolkonsky and General Kutuzov, two of the characters from whose point of view we see the Battle of Austerlitz.

Anna Barker: By the time we get to volume three and we are discussing the Battle of Borodino, the 1812 battle in Russia, we see the battle through the point of view of a civilian. Count Pierre Bezukhov, who becomes an eyewitness to absolute horrors and atrocities. Sixty thousand men died in one day on that battlefield. And so seeing the horrors of war through the eyes of someone who is unaware of the greater strategic importance, and just sees the carnage and horror of that war, is extremely important for Tolstoy.

Anna Barker: Also, he introduces us to all of these characters who cannot pray for death. Natasha Rostova is the soul of the novel. And when she's invited to a church service at the beginning of the Napoleonic invasion, she prays fervently for the victory of the Russian soldiers, but she can't pray for the death of the French, because she just feels that it is not in our human ability to pray for death.

Anna Barker: Later on in the novel, the same character Pierre Bezukhov, who is going to witness the atrocities committed by the French in Moscow. And it's fascinating. Pierre is a person who has a hard time accepting the human condition, and he asks huge questions throughout the novel. And eventually, in the course of his musings about what it means to be a human being and what the purpose of life is, he comes to the conclusion that his purpose in life is to kill Napoleon. And he needs to get rid of Napoleon and then everything will go back to normal.

Anna Barker: And as soon as he comes to this realization, he puts on a peasant outfit, he decides to conceal himself, which is very hard because Pierre is enormous. And as soon as he decides that killing Napoleon is his mission in life, he does three remarkable things. And those things are, he saves the life of a French officer, Officer Ramballe. Then he attempts to save an Armenian woman from assaulting French soldiers. And he saves a little girl from the fire, and at that point, he is arrested by French authorities.

Anna Barker: It's the end of volume three of War and Peace, and they ask him, "What are you doing? Why are you holding this child?" And Pierre tells us, she's my daughter whom I saved from the flames, which is remarkable, because Pierre, this civilian who is trying to come to terms with the horrors of war, all of a sudden treats every burning child as his child and becomes sort of this enormous embodiment of Russia.

Anna Barker: Some of the prints that we see in Goya's Disasters of War could serve as illustrations to War and Peace. I would actually love to see a volume of War and Peace printed with Goya's illustrations. A couple of the prints that are on display at the Richie Ballroom at the IMU show French soldiers executing civilians tied to a post, and they are shooting at these people point blank. There is a moment like that in volume four of War and Peace when the French are executing civilians and they're doing it inside of a convent, the New Maiden Convent in Moscow.

Anna Barker: And Tolstoy tells us that even though they were following orders, they knew somewhere deep down that they were committing crimes. And it's fascinating that Tolstoy posits this question that will be the most important question that will be discussed after World War II during the Nuremberg Trials. What does it mean to commit a crime? A person who is following orders, are they committing a crime? And Tolstoy is asking this question over and over and over again in the course of War and Peace.

Joan Kjaer: Hmm. Well, thankfully we'll have you with us also in our next segment where we'll really look at some of the adaptations of War and Peace and the way different people have pulled elements of the story out to focus on. But, thank you.

Joan Kjaer: So Denise, I wonder if you could sort of not only tell us about this period in Spanish history of the Napoleonic Wars, the period when Goya was alive, but

also what Goya has meant as a Spanish painter and as an important Spanish figure.

Denise Filios: Right. So as Joyce has already, and Anna also mentioned that this was a period in Spanish history that there was a lot of turmoil, a lot of back and forth, a lot of political chaos and uncertainty. Well, Goya seemed to sort of manage to float above, as it were, in terms of sustaining his own career.

Denise Filios: You can also see in these particular etchings a certain movement in his artistic career toward more dark, more gritty and realistic. I think in many ways these etchings are sort of moving toward those black paintings that Goya is very well known for, that he painted in approximately the last 10 years of his life. Those black paintings include this very striking image of Saturn eating his children, which my son saw at the age of four in the Prado Museum. And it really, I think it resonates in his memory now.

Denise Filios: But we also honestly may think of Goya as more of a playful painter, that he has done many cartoons for tapestries showing these sort of idyllic natural scenes, court figures playing at being peasants in the countryside. And then, of course, his very famous double portrait of the dressed maja or dressed young woman and The Nude Maja, the naked young woman.

Denise Filios: If you're interested in Spanish history, there's a fantastic Netflix series called The Ministry of Time or El Ministerio del Tiempo. And there's an episode on the painting of the La Maja desnuda, the undressed maja, which I think is very much worth watching. It's quite fun. And giving you a good sense of, but what some of the court customs, the court practices, the games, for example, and some of the important personalities at the time during Goya's lifetime.

Denise Filios: In terms of his importance as a painter, Goya in some ways is sort of like Velazquez who is of course very well known for Las Meninas, right? That portrait of the young royal daughter, surrounded by her nursemaids with Velasquez in the background. We're seeing from the point of view of the royal couple, the king and queen, her being painted. You can see them only in the mirror in the very background of that painting.

Denise Filios: So Velasquez, whose work is, honestly, I would say perhaps far better known than Goya. However, Goya, tremendously productive. There are more rooms in the Prado Museum devoted to the work of Goya than there are to the work of Velasquez. And the tremendous breadth, and I would say resonance, of his work, which is part of what I have to say ...

Denise Filios: When I went to see the exhibit in the Stanley Museum, I was, I so appreciate the way these prints are exhibited. I feel like the way that they are being shown in our art museum is more effective than the way they are displayed in the Prado Museum for various reasons. They are very, very accessible, very easy to see. You've got the, these are almost cartoonish images, each of which has a sort of

subtitle. The subtitles are printed, available on this sort of cards beside the prints and translated to English to make them very accessible.

Denise Filios: They're organized somewhat thematically. The theme is not revealed and so it really engages the viewer in looking at these groupings, trying to understand them, and the way this exhibit invites you to get involved. These are extremely accessible pieces of art. You do not have to know about who Goya is. You don't have to know about the Napoleonic Wars in Spain to engage with these and to really appreciate them, in part because these are the Disasters of War and there is a real specificity.

Denise Filios: There's a testimonial aspect of these. They're capturing the truth and the really ugly truth of these horrors. But there's also a certain almost universal aspect to them. I'm really impressed with how compassionate the gaze is on these victims of violence, how they are fully human and they're depicted as fully human, not stripped of their humanity despite the violence they've been subjected to. Even the bodies of dead soldiers that have been stripped of their clothing retain a certain humanity, and maybe that humanity also means that these images are in some ways somewhat universal. As in, these are very specific, early 19th century Spanish, French figures in these works of art.

Denise Filios: But what we're seeing, these horrors are horrors that you could see in any context of a civil war or an invasion, which is, of course, the case of these images that are being presented by Goya. That they are, I think, they are almost instantly recognizable, I would say. These images are precedents to a Picasso in Guernica. There's some very similar images that Picasso used to illustrate the horror of the bombing of that city in the Basque Country during the Civil War period in the 1930s.

Denise Filios: But we can also think of these images as perhaps being relevant right now in Spain, where there's a lot of memory battles that are still being engaged in around the Civil War of the 1930s around the dictatorship of Franco. The exhumation of mass graves is still going on in Spain, a certain reclamation of memory in Spain. But honestly, I think that these images could be almost equally applicable to illustrating the horrors of the Spanish conquest in the Americas, right? That they are, the specificity does not mean that they are not also universal. That they do capture this sort of fundamental humanity and the way that wars can bring out the worst, but also how they can bring out the best.

Denise Filios: I'm especially impressed by a collection that focuses on women in war. Some of these women are victims, but many of them are resisting, actively resisting a rapist, for example. Or there's one fantastic print that shows a woman who is struggling to light a cannon surrounded by fallen, dead soldiers. And so, these women who are resisting actively and continuing to fight when all hope is gone, these are wonderful. I hope everyone is able to get to the Stanley Museum to see these stunning, stunning works of art.

Joan Kjaer: There's another one. I saw the exhibition this afternoon and there's another one that I think was very striking with a woman who's being held by a soldier, a man, who appears to be ready to attack her in every way. And there's an old woman, maybe her mother, coming at the soldier with a pike or a knife or something. And in these very, they're small images.

Denise Filios: Yeah.

Joan Kjaer: But you see facial expressions. You see desperation.

Anna Barker: May I add one more thing? Denise mentioned the Saturn eating his children that is at the Prado, the Goya. And it's fascinating to what extent this project, the Disasters of War and Tolstoy's project, is discussing to what extent the powers that be eat up the young during times of conflict. Because Tolstoy continuously talks about the fact that these generals are sending tens of thousands of men to die for their personal vindication. They had the idea that this is going to work out. And they're sending tens of thousands of boys into battle, knowing full well that the carnage is going to be overwhelming, but they would like to have the righteousness, the self-righteousness of their decisions validated.

Anna Barker: And there's actually a print in special collections. The special collections exhibit is the second part of this exhibit and the print is entitled, They Do Not Agree. It depicts two military commanders sitting on horseback talking to each other, while in the background, there is horrendous carnage happening. So these two cannot agree on how to proceed at the same time as this machine, the Saturn of this world, is mowing down young people by tens of thousands and these people are not going to come back. And these ideas, these grandiose ideas of tactics and strategy on the battlefield are causing just untold human suffering.

Denise Filios: I want to underscore that the curation and the conceptual scaffolding for both exhibitions at the Stanley Museum of Art and also at special collections, this really came from the work that the real experts and the professors, Luis and Anna, brought to bear on this material. The conceptual groupings that you see at the Stanley Museum of Art was something that Luis really, Luis Martin Estudillo really worked out in looking very carefully at our amazing set of, full set of prints and the presentation with the print drawers in special collections. And the list and the quotes from Tolstoy were incredibly thoughtfully selected by Anna Barker.

Denise Filios: So this is an exhibition that really can only take place in the context of a research university with such depth of expertise. And the production of these exhibitions would not have been possible, first of all, without our amazing preparatorial staff, but also without the work that conservation did. And I know we'll talk about conservation on the third part of our conversation, but I just want to underscore that this was a fully collaborative effort and I think it really highlights the ways in which we work together in a ecosystem. So.

Joan Kjaer: Anna, it would be a good time perhaps to ask you about some of the other, some of the things people can see around town and some of the talks that will be given.

Anna Barker: Right. So we are going to read War and Peace out loud. Congratulations, I always say to community. We are doing it the second time around because my students told me that reading that novel out loud once is not as cool as reading it out loud twice. So every single reading slot is gone. It's astonishing. I have 160 people who signed up to read War and Peace.

Anna Barker: This incredible feat is going to be accomplished between September 30th and October 4th, right here on the Ped Mall by the fountain. I'm coming back to my original reading location. This is where I read 10 years ago when I got started with these public readings. It was Anna Karenina in 2010 when we commemorated the 100th anniversary of Tolstoy's death. And because War and Peace is just such an incredibly complex book that keeps having reverberations culturally throughout the 20th century and the 19th century.

Anna Barker: We will talk a little bit more on during our second segment about the project, the collaborative project with Film Scene, who is bringing War and Peace, the Russian eight-hour classic to Film Scene starting on the last day of the book festival, October 6.

Joyce Tsai: And then the opera.

Anna Barker: And the opera. Yes, the opera will be, there is an opera based on War and Peace. I always tell my students that every single great work of Russian literature has to have an opera based on it, from Eugene Onegin to The Queen of Spades. Ana Karenina has a ballet dedicated to it. Boris Godunov, the Pushkin drama, has an opera based on it. So yes, even Gogol's The Nose has an opera based on it. So the opera War and Peace is going to be screened at the music school on October 15th. It's a Tuesday and all of my students are required to attend.

Denise Filios: I also wanted to add to that event. Luis Martin Estudillo is going to be back in the States and he's going to give a talk at the Stanley Museum of Art. I don't have the date right off the top of my head, but if you look on our website and look under Smart Talks, you'll find it there. But it will be a wonderful opportunity to really plumb the depths of his expertise, because he's actually preparing some serious new research on this material.

Joan Kjaer: Wow. Well, I can't thank you enough for getting us going on this evening's conversation. Thank you so much to Denise Filios, Anna Barker and Joyce Tsai. And I hope all of you will stay with us for part two of the discussion on Art in the Face of War, when our guests will take us inside the film and operatic treatments of epic tales such as War and Peace. World Canvas programming is available on iTunes, the Public Radio Exchange, and the International Programs

website. I'm Joan Kjaer and for UI International Programs, thank you for joining us.