

THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO
LAW LIBRARY
Information Series



History of the
Rule of Law
Oil Paintings



The Supreme Court of Ohio Rule of Law Gallery is home to a series of six, 4-by-8-foot oil paintings created by artist Ron Anderson that depict the evolution of law in Western civilization. The paintings are on permanent loan from the Ohio State Bar Association.

THE CODE OF HAMMURABI AND THE RULE OF RAMSES THE GREAT



The first panel presents Hammurabi (1795-1750 B.C.), the Babylonian king to whom the first written Code of Law is attributed. He appears to be in the process of passing judgment on a situation before him, while a scribe records the proceedings in cuneiform.

To the right of the Egyptian column in the center of the panel is a study of the “Land of Khem,” or Egypt. A series of hieroglyphs on the column lead into a scene depicting the Reign of Ramses II, pharaoh from about 1290 B.C. to 1224 B.C. He is best known as the ruler of the 19th Dynasty to whom some of the greatest architectural wonders of the ancient world are attributed. Ramses is also credited with the earliest-known peace treaty, drawn between his kingdom and that of Hattusilis III of the Hittite Empire, thought to have been arranged around 1271 B.C. Ramses is pictured here with his wife, Queen Nefertari. They appear embroiled in an intense scene with their attendants.

DRACO, CODER OF LAW, AND THE TWELVE TABLES OF ROMAN LAW

The second painting depicts ancient Greece. During this period, Draco is credited as the first law maker in Athens. He enacted laws so severe, that even minor offenses were punishable by death. As “archon eponymous,” Draco was the first to codify Athenian laws.



Draco’s laws were superseded in the early sixth century B.C. by the code according to Solon. Solon became “Archon of Attica” in 594 B.C., abating civil unrest by introducing the “Seisachtheia,” a set of ordinances that immediately improved conditions for everyone. This was so successful, he rewrote the Greek constitution so that it became the “Solonian Constitution.” Solon repealed most of the Draconian Code, creating the “timokratia,” a form of oligarchy. Solon also was the first to introduce the concept of trial by jury.

To the right of the red drapery in the center of the painting, one of the rulers of the Roman Empire appears in heated discussion with several senators in the halls of the forum. Here Anderson depicts a representation of the *Twelve Tables of Roman Law* or “Les Duodecim Tabularum.” The evolution of Roman law comprises about a thousand years, from the *Twelve Tables* (449 B.C.) to the *Justinian Code* (530 A.D.) The *Twelve Tables* was the first legal code to truly define and separate private law and civil procedures and formed the cornerstone of the constitution of the Roman Republic. Of major import from the Republican era is the “lex Aquila” (286 B.C.), a statute considered to be the beginning of contemporary tort law.

The Classical period of Rome saw the realization of law as a science. “Modern” jurists developed and shaped Roman law in new and revolutionary ways, such as defining the distinction between contract law and tort law as different and separate forms of legal obligation. Roman jurisprudence began development of the first forms of standard contracts, and defined the difference between right-of-ownership and the right to manipulate an item or thing, such as a possession.

The system of the jurist republic gave way to the principate, a monarchy governed almost solely by the emperor. Despite this, Gaius, emperor and a prominent jurist from about 160 A.D., created a

of private law organized for the first time into specific categories, “personae, res and actiones.” Gaius’ system is recognizable in Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England* and in various French civil codes.

Post-classical law directly conflicted with the orders of the emperors, and from that point on statesmanship was supplanted by absolute monarchy. The *Codex Justinianus* was published in 529 and revised in 534. A publication of the works of the classical jurists, known as *The Digest* or “Pandectae” was published in 533. A textbook of the study of law, *The Institutiones*, was published based on the works of Gaius. Classical Roman law experienced a revival around the 11th century in much of Europe, particularly Italy. England was an exception, however, as the next painting shows.

THE SIGNING OF THE MAGNA CARTA



The third panel features the signing of the Magna Carta by King John at Runnymede, England, on June 15, 1215, as observed by the feudal barons, knights and vassals of the time. A great deal of tension and hostility is expressed in this scene. King John was coerced by the land owners to sign the original document, known as the “Articles of the Barons,” against his will. He had no motivation to enforce the document, as it was sealed under coercion by the land barons. King John’s demise in 1216 initiated the first in a series of reissues of the charter. The second revision came in 1225, with the final version completed in 1297. Today’s English Law uses Articles 1, 9 and 29 of the 1297 revision and Articles 1, 13, 39 and 40 from the 1215 original charter.

King Henry III succeeded King John on the throne, and the Magna Carta became a formidable document, establishing that even the king could be bound by the rules of law. Parliament issued the final version of the Magna Carta on Oct. 12, 1297, during Edward I’s

reign. It was part of a statute known as “Confirmatio cartarum,” (25 Edw.I), a confirmation of the 1225 reissue.

DETHRONING THE MONARCHY



In the fourth panel Anderson presents his vision of the bloody coup that was the French Revolution. The painting features gruesome images of severed heads, as men and women in varying states of panicked confusion wreak havoc and revenge, while others flee for their lives.

Thus began a volatile period in French history, with Napoleon Bonaparte as first consul (1799-1804), and then as Emperor Napoleon (1804-1815), during a lengthy and debilitating series of wars sometimes euphemized as the period of “Enlightened Monarchy.”

In the panel’s second scene, Napoleon crowns himself emperor. The major contribution of this period is the Napoleonic Code. It was developed from earlier French laws and Justinian’s *Corpus Juris Civilis*. However, many historians believe that the only honorable deed accomplished by French policies at the time was the support of the North American emancipation.

SIGNING OF THE CONSTITUTION



In the fifth painting, the Founding Fathers gather for a momentous occasion. The Constitutional

Convention concluded Sept. 17, 1787, and the oldest codified, written, national Constitution was signed by delegates from the 13 American states. The U.S. Constitution officially went into effect in 1789, and has remained a model for nations throughout the world. The document, considered “the supreme law of the land,” designates that powers are “separate and distinct” for each of the three branches of government so that a balance of power is achieved through a series of careful checks and balances.

LADY JUSTICE LEADING THE PEOPLE



The final painting in the series is Anderson’s portrait of modern times, from the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s to the present day. In this panel, Lady Justice symbolically leads her people. At the base of the pillar she approaches, the scales of justice are firmly grasped in the right hand of a young man, struggling to hold the balance, as he gazes up at her for direction. The Sword of Truth, positioned in her left hand, points earthward. Her blindfolded face is turned over her right shoulder, intent on the presence of the youth steadying the scales. She appears to protect him, beneath her flag-wielding arm.

ARTIST PROFILE

Ron Anderson is a contemporary Ohio artist, illustrator and art educator. He has been a successful working artist for more than 20 years throughout the north central United States, and has received many awards for his work, including a nomination for the 2005 Governor’s Award for Art in Ohio.

Anderson teaches fashion illustration, art portfolio and painting *en plein air* classes at the Columbus College of Art & Design.

The Law Library oil paintings were influenced by the works of two 19th century French painters: the Neo-Classical political commentaries of Jacques-

Louis David and the romantic ideologies of Eugene Delacroix.

For more information contact Library Assistant Di Taveira at taveriad@sconet.state.oh.us. Bibliography available upon request.

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