



Tammany Tiger Loose: 'What Are You Going to Do About It?', from "Harper's Weekly"

Date
published November 11, 1871

Primary Maker
Thomas Nast

Medium
Wood engraving on newsprint

Description

“This is surely one of Nast’s most powerful pictures. Note all the principal villains above. This is one of several pictures that show the influence of Nast’s visit to Rome’s Coliseum in 1860.” (SOURCE: Jay Williams, "Thomas Nast: America in Black and White, 2002) "Nast depicts the scene succeeding Columbia’s slaughter to evoke a nationalistic sentiment against Tammany Hall. Inspired by his visit to Rome’s Coliseum in 1860, this illustration alludes to the brutal nature of the Roman state, which was headed by a single Emperor. Within the cartoon, Tammany Hall ring leader Boss Tweed fulfils this role, enjoying the spectacle with other well-known Democratic politicians. In the foreground, a slew of bodies directs the eye towards a mauled Columbia: lying on a torn banner of 'law' with her broken sword to her left. Wearing a collar inscribed 'Americus'—a synonym of the 'Big Six', the name of Tweed’s firemen’s company— the Tammany tiger flaunts his kill, fixing his eyes on the next victim, the viewer. The mauling of Columbia’s femininity combined with the evocative caption summons an empathetic response: Nast almost asks the male viewer to avenge her." (SOURCE: Mary Bei Prince, "Thomas Nast's Conception of Nineteenth Century Women", 2019)

Dimensions
Composition: 13 1/2 × 20 1/2 in. (34.3 × 52.1 cm) Sheet: 16 × 22 in. (40.6 × 55.9 cm)