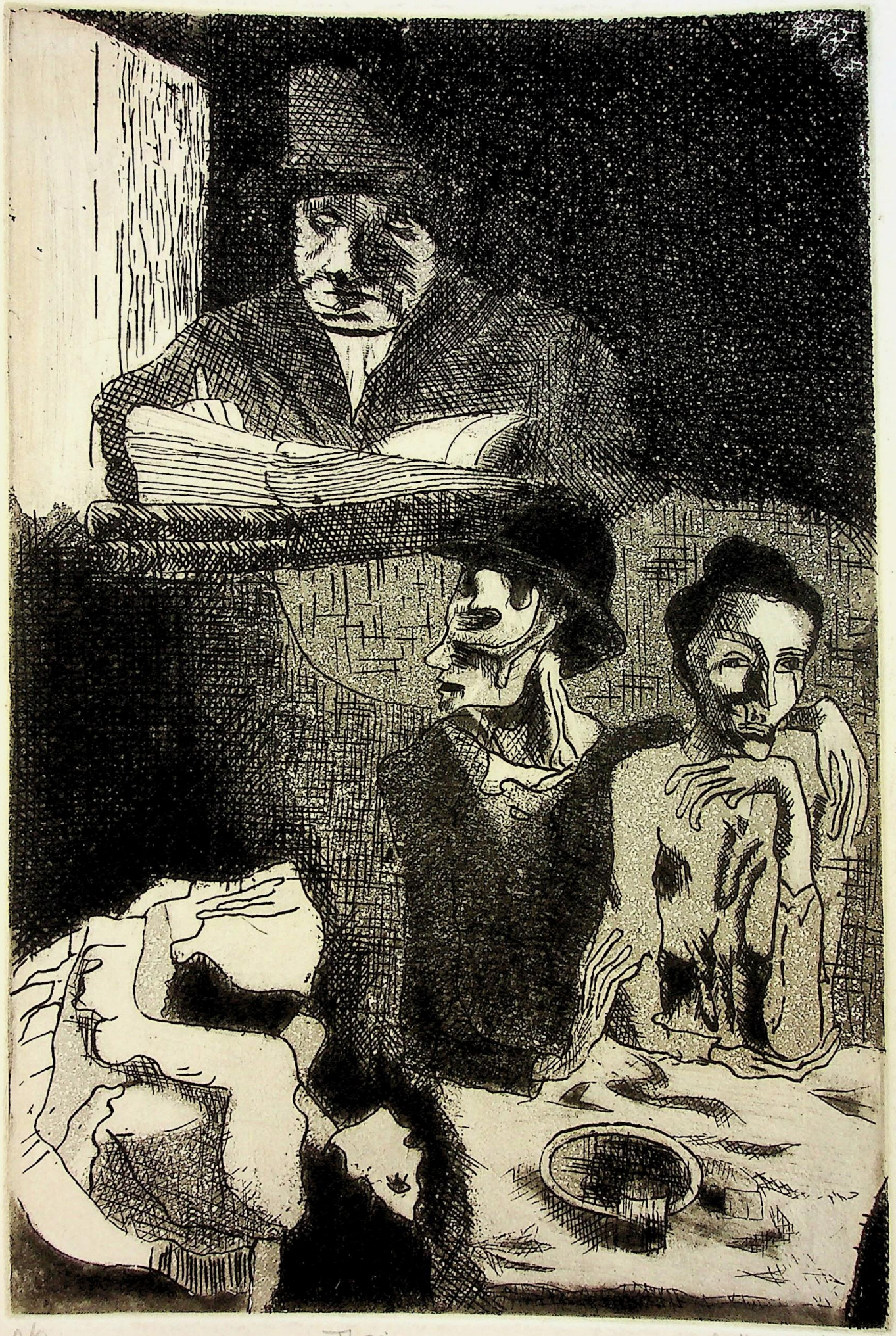

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THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

ETCHING - ITS HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO:

THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN & COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES

AND

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BY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations

Introduction

This Thesis is mainly concerned with the printing technique known as Etching. This is the oldest of the indirect *intaglio techniques. There are different types of Etching, which will also be discussed. Included in these are soft-ground Etching, Mezzotint, Aquatint, Stipple Etching and Sugar Aquatint.

The basic reason for doing this thesis is to examine the status of the print medium of Etching, from its inception to the present day.

When the origins of Etching are considered, it is Rembrandt who comes to mind. None of the artists of the seventeenth century pursued the farthest potentialities of this complex technique so completely as did Rembrandt.

I will discuss some of his etchings in this thesis along with the etchings of Goya, who took a different approach with the various techniques and also some of the works of Picasso, whose attitude to the making of prints was exceptionally important to the future of the printed image. I will be concerned with the concept of Original Prints and the quality of prints, bearing in mind that the importance of this concept is now inflated due to the great technical progress made in the production of prints.

I will also make reference to the etching revival which dominated the second half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century, and the various reasons for it. I will look at the modern print, and assess its status in the art world today.

I will look at the modern etching techniques and assess the current status of etching in the print world.

*Intaglio:-

A method of printing in which the image area is sunk into the surface of the plate.

Chapter 1

The Intaglio Print

At the dawn of history men scratched and incised lines into pieces of bone, soft stone, skin or bark. This technique was continued by the seal and gem cutters of ancient Egypt, by Greek coin designers, and mirror engravers, and by the Romans; it was brought to a point of great refinement by the artisans who embellished medieval weapons and armour. From that point developed the meeting of two kinds of creative endeavour, that of the skilled engraver - artisan and that of the artist collaborating in their efforts to produce a multiple image, a print.

Engraving

The art of engraving, an intaglio process, was developed around the beginning of the fifteenth century. This method of printing from metal, incised directly with a sharp tool, seems to have been discovered independently in Italy and Germany.

Italian goldsmiths used an engraving technique called niello in which hollowed lines were filled with enamel. This produced a black drawing on a white background. The chief object of the niello technique was not to obtain a print, but a proof was often taken as a record of work carried out. Naturally, niello engravings do not involve the use of a printing press.

The Early Engravers

It is generally accepted that the first prints on paper were taken from engraved metal, during the first half of the fifteenth century.

All the early engravers are anonymous, sometimes known only by their chop marks or initials or arbitrarily named by art historians for the work or subject matter that

was most characteristic of them.

The earliest dated print bears the date 1446, a Christ Crowned with Thorns, of which only one known copy survives. At the same time, charming copper engravings of beasts, birds, flowers and people turned up and became best sellers at country fairs and church festivals - or whenever saints and sinners congregated. These early prints became a source of income for enterprising artists, engravers and publishers.

Development

The engraved print, as a form of visual expression, was established as a result of several factors. The main reasons can be broadly attributed to the following: the increasing influence of the Renaissance throughout Europe, the impact and widening effect of printing, the need to further and strengthen the teaching of Christianity (for this the production and distribution of the print as illustration was invaluable), the rapidly improving quality and availability of paper and the understandable desire of individual artists to reach a wider public.

The first artist, as opposed to craftsman - engraver known by name, was Martin Schongauer (1450-1491). In his work are many of the essentially Gothic features of northern European art; imagination, realism, a strong expressive use of line and a composition firmly and vigorously constructed. Compared with the earlier engravers, his technique was complex. Even at this early stage, Schongauer had developed the art of engraving to a level regarded by many as the most perfect form of the art. Engraving, if only in a technical sense, was seen to be developed muchfurther by Durer (1471-1528), The Genius of Durer was fully recognized even in his day, and as a burin engraver his brilliance of technique was unquestionable. He belongs essentially to the Gothic tradition, and although apparently much preoccupied with Renaissance ideals, he had an intense and typically northern concern for meticulous detailed statement and in his burin engravings, he was able to express this close

and exact observation of nature to an extraordinary degree, although it would seem that in the opinion of some recent and contemporary engravers, his extreme and often overwhelming display of technical virtuosity has come to seem excessive and extravagent.

There is little doubt, however, that Durer's influence was partly instrumental in revealing and prompting what must have been the inevitable reproductive potential of engraving.

In Italy, the engraved print developed rather differently from the German print. The Italian engravers followed a long tradition of ornamentation (e.g. niello-work).

Two main and recognizable styles of early Italian engraving were known as the 'fine' and the 'broad' manner. One of the masters of this period was Andrea Mantegna (1431 - 1506). His technique typifies the whole broad manner, a method of engraving almost modelling with open spaced, mostly parellel lines, making full and positive use of the whole of the paper. The fine manner school made less use of spacing and light, had less consideration of area, but employed to a great degree fine short close but rather weaker, strokes and crosshatching.

The free borrowing of designs from artists of the North, Schongauer and Durer foremost among them, had become a lucrative industry among Italian engravers. They rarely gave credit to the source of their prints. Engraving had become a flourishing business, exploited by skilled interpreters of the great and popular masters.

Even in the fifteenth century, there was an increasing tendency for artists, especially artists of renown, to rely on skilled assistants to execute part, if not the whole, of the actual work of engraving. This division of labour was an important factor contributing to the future development of the print. The artist conceived and drew the design, but could hand over the laborious task of reproducing

it, to the professional engraver. Probably the first of these early professionals was Raimondi (1480-1534), whose impressive facility, and individual, and sympathetic interpretations of other artists' works, including the work of Michelangelo (1475-1564), Durer and Lucas Van Leyden (14 -1533), had a powerful and lasting influence on the technique of subsequent engravers. These often devious practices have confused the experts and will continue to do so but which, if any, of the plates can safely be attributed to the hand of the master? We simply do not know. It may be safer to assume that the engravings which show less brilliance of skill but more strokes of a genius, might have come directly from the master's hand. Even the great Durer admitted borrowing freely from his favourite artists across the Italian border. He certainly used some of Mantegna's designs in some of his prints, translating them into his own compositions. Even so, he protested about the pirating of his own work by Raimondi.

By the sixteenth century, few creative artists continued to engrave their own plates.

By the seventeenth century, engraving had become the accepted method for reproducing illustrations and works of art. The growing mass and variety of reproductive work continued. Other technically interesting aspects of engraving appeared, such as book illustrations, title pages, portraits, maps, architectural views and garden plans. What survived of this once vast field of work was largely replaced in the nineteenth century by the engraved woodblock and later by various photomechanical processes. To the creative artist, engraving had long been too easily associated with the technically restricting, demanding and time consuming labour of reproducing material for print, or with the older fading tradition of ornament and embellishment. Line etching was introduced. The use of acid on metal first employed by armourers and goldsmiths gave the artist a much needed release from drudgery. It was originally introduced to primarily economise on the time and labour required for burin engraving, while still achieving a similar effect.

Technique

Burin engraving

To engrave means, literally, to cut, inscribe or even carve into the surface of a substance that is normally hard and durable enough to render the cut as permanent as possible. Engraving involves a form of cutting which is, in reality, a pushing, rather than a pulling or dragging action.

An engraved image for printing is cut into a flat sheet of metal normally of copper, with a small hand tool or burin. The plate is then inked and printed.

Line-engraving on metal is the most direct of all the intaglio processes, it is also the most intractable and demands the greatest control and discipline. A degree of skill has to be acquired in order to work the plate, and this takes serious effort and patience in cutting.

To engrave a straight and even line, one must engage the burin's point in the copper at a fairly low angle, and decrease this angle further while moving slowly and deliberately forward - but not downward.

Heavier lines are made even more slowly and are intensified, perferably by repeated cuts either within the same cut or closely alongside it, and not simply by exaggerated pressure.

Engraving a curved line requires more active participation from the non-cutting hand; this hand has to guide and revolve the plate, so that the area to be cut is actually moving in the opposite direction to the cut. The burin also moves, but only very slightly; almost imperceptibly its point presses forward, as if intersecting the oncoming expanse of copper.

Tone and texture

It should be possible to create tone, texture and, in a sense, colour, by using only the burin. Considerable variation can be achieved by line or dot, or by a combination of both. An area of uniform, heavy black can be built up by close spacing of strong, regular, parellel lines. This can be further intensified by additional lines cutting across the first, but at a slightly altered angle. An infinitely subtle range of greys can be made by careful spacing of fine and broken lines, and to a lesser extent by dotting.

A dotting effect can be made by simply engraving a group of short, abrupt cuts.

Round dots and minute circles are cut by rotating the plate with the burin's point engaged in the metal at varying angles.

Stipple engraving

Stipple engraving is a method of engraving a plate entirely with minute dots.

Gradated, soft tonal effects are gradually built up by various systems, for instance, the general outline can be indicated by etching dots made with a needle-point or with a single-wheel roulette. The main tones are then worked in with an assortment of roulettes, for instance, the drum roulette, multiple-point and drypoint needles. Usually the engraving is completed with a stippling tool - a burin with a specially shaped, downward-curved blade or shank, to facilitate easier dotting or stippling.

Stipple engraving originated in France in the eighteenth century, but was more fully exploited by the English. It was predominantly a reproduction method.

The artist most associated with the stippling method was the Italian, F. Bartdozzi.

Examples of Engravings

Martin Schongauers - 'The Betrayal of Christ' late 15th Century (engraving)

Schongauer, through his use of the burin line in this engraving, displayed a wealth of texture and graceful ornamentation and rich detail of dress and landscape along with a sense of movement.

He added depth to the print by his use of tone. The lightest section is the foreground. The seated figure is broken loose from the 2D plane.

The darker areas were built up by close-spacing lines, which overlapped each other in sections e.g. the clothing of the standing figure representing Christ in the centre background.

The dotting effect in certain sections e.g. in the landscape area, to the centre right hand edge of the print, he made by simply engraving a group of short abrupt cuts.

Albrecht Durer 'Adam and Eve' 1504 (engraving)

Nowhere else in his other engravings has Durer treated the flesh with such caressing care, using much fine dotting in the modelling, and in no previous plate has he used such a variety of textures in the conscious striving for colour.

Through his use of textures e.g. the fur of the cat in the foreground and the bark of the trees, and the meticulous detail which he created by dots and by close-spaced lines, crossing in every direction in some sections e.g. the cliff in top right hand side of the print, he was able to express his close and exact observation of nature.

Through his use of tone, he created depth in the print. The lighter area is the foreground where the two rigid figures stand out in contrast to the background.

Andrea Mantegna 'Battle of the Sea Gods' 1485-8 (engraving)

Mantegna's technique is worthy of close study. It never obscures or overshadows the grandoise dimensions of his powerful figures.

His engraving technique involves almost modelling, with open-spaced, mostly parellel lines, making full and positive use of the paper.

Through his use of tone, the important section of the print, the foreground where the figures are, stands out from the darker background of closely-spaced lines.

The gestures of the figures and the use of swift sketchlike wavy lines - e.g. the waves create a sense of movement in the print.

The facial expressions add an atmosphere of fear and panic to the piece.

PLATE 1

2

PLATE 2

PLATE 3

Chapter 2

Etching

In the second decade of the sixteenth century, the new printing process of etching was introduced.

It burst into its great flowering, pushing engraving, which had deteriorated into a reproductive medium, off the stage.

Technique

To make an etching, the artist uses a metal plate of copper or zinc although the first etchings were on iron. He covers the plate with ground, an acid resisting substance made of varnish or wax. When the ground dries, the artist draws on it with an etching needle and the plate is placed in a bath of water and acid. Where the ground has been scratched away, the acid etches the metal. The earliest known etchings are by Daniel Hopter, active at Augsburg between 1493 and 1536, the Swiss Urs Graf and Durer who did five etchings on iron, among them - "The Agony in the Garden". The earliest Italian etching is by Parmigiano (1503-1540), whose prints are more sketchy and spontaneous than those of northern artists.

Another technique, Drypoint, was also invented (1465 approx). In Drypoint, a sharp needle scratches the design directly into the plate - no ground is needed. Drypoint is often combined with etching or engraving on one plate. The first drypoint engravings known in the history of prints are those by the master of the Housebrook, active in Germany between 1465 and 1500. The technique was used by Durer, for example, in his St. Jerome by a Pollard Willow of 1512. But the unsurpassed master was to be Rembrandt, who used drypoint on its own, or with etching.

Mezzotint

The mezzotint technique of printmaking was invented in the middle of the seventeenth century in Germany, by a German soldier Ludwig Von Siegen (1609-1680). The earliest known mezzotint is "The Grand Executioner", done in about 1660 by Prince Rupert, the Palatine Prince Ruprecht Von der Pflaz. "The Collossus" by Francisco Goya (1746-1828), engraved in about 1815, was produced entirely by this technique, which was later taken up by others, notably by Edvard Munch (1863-1944). With a many-toothed tool called a rocker, the artist covers an entire copper plate with tiny dots. The plate then prints a solid black. Next the grain is ground away. The more an area is rubbed, the lighter it becomes. Mezzotint portraits were popular in England in the eighteenth century.

Soft Ground Etching

In the seventeenth century a technique developed, using soft-ground. Soft-ground is made of a wax or some other non-hardening substance. With this ground the artist can make softer lines than with hard ground. He places a piece of paper or fabric on top of the ground-coated plate and draws on it. The drawing lifts the gound from the plate. When the plate is etched, fuzzy lines are made. This technique has in recent years been taken up again.

Aquatint

Aquatint was a major advance in intaglio printing. It was developed around 1768 and it was invented by Jean-Baptiste Le Prince (1734-84). This process produces a range of grainy values from silver grey to intense black. A coating of special powder is dusted on the plate and heated. The plate is protected by the powder, but the metal

inbetween the grains of powder can be etched. The plate is etched a number of times until the desired darkness is achieved. Because the method was adaptable to colour printing, it almost completely replaced the mezzotint colour process.

Francois Janinet (1752-1813) was the first to employ it for colour prints, by using several plates. Francoisco Goya made great use of it and it has been one of the favourite techniques of Picasso.

Stipple Etching

Stipple etching is built up as a system of minute dots, applied on a grounded plate with needles, a roulette (spur wheel) or moulette (drum roulette). The plate is then bitten in acid in the usual way.

Sugar aquatint or life-ground etching

The drawing is done on copper with a pen or brush dipped in a solution of ink and sugar. When the drawing is dry, the entire surface of the plate is covered with a liquid varnish. The plate is then immersed in hot water; the sugary solution in which the lines have been drawn melts and lifts the varnish so that the drawing shows through. This process then continues as for an ordinary aquatint. Its popularity is new but the basic principle of this technique has long been known. Sugar aquatint has been much used by Picasso.

Original Prints

It is only during the past few decades that the need has been felt to regard prints as 'original' and to qualify them as such.

In the past, they were called engravings, and later the term lithograph was also used; or else, more generally they were referred to as prints, but the word had a more distinguished meaning than it has today.

It was not until the nineteenth century that a distinction began to be made between creative graphic art, such as that of Albrecht Durer (1471-1528), and Rembrandt Harmenszoon Van Rign (1606-1669), and the kind of reproductions done, for example, by Marcantonio Raimondi (1480-1530), who copied Durer and reproduced on copper the works of the Renaissance masters, even though he was himself an engraver of undisputed talent. But both kinds of print were considered original and genuine; the creative kind, that is produced by artists doing original work on copper (judged on a level with paintings, hence perhaps the term peintre-graveur), and reproductions, this is, where an already existing model was copied on to a plate. Eventually, it was the work of the peintre-graveur which became the more highly prized, although the old established practice of making reproductions has never entirely died out, even if it is now understood in a rather different way.

The concept of an original print is therefore quite recent, and is partly a consequence of the great technical progress which has been made in the production of prints.

Over the years, museum curators, artists and others with a special interest in prints, have met together to try and draw up once and for all some precise definition of an

original print, acceptable to everyone and at the same time providing the printmaker with specific rules to follow.

Various definitions and guidelines were put forward between 1960 and 1965. The last one was given in 1964, by the Comite National de la Gravure. It was accepted by the Chambre Syndicale de I'Estampe et du Dessin and then published in Nouvelles de I'Estampe in February, 1965.

The following are to be regarded as original engravings, prints and lithographs; impressions printed in black and white or in colour from one or more matrices conceived and executed entirely by the artist himself, whatever the technique employed, and excluding the use of all mechanical or photo-mechanical processes. Only those prints which correspond to this definition, have the right to be called original prints.

This is still a helpful definition but it does not cover many of the situations which are arising now. The modern methods of printing, particularly in screenprinting, have offered artists ways to create images and textures that have not been attainable in prior years.

Museums are accepting as original, those impressions which would have been rejected ten or twenty years ago.

Paper

Paper for printing must be structurally homogeneous and solid, free from impurities and sufficiently porous to absorb the printing ink, and yet dense enough so as not to give rise to stains when it is subjected to pressure by the printing press.

The best kind used in Europe was the old laid paper.

Japanese paper was used by the best European engravers over six hundred years ago. The Japanese produced the queen of papers, which remained for many centuries without rival in the whole world for its toughness, density and glaze.

It is certain that Rembrandt used this paper.

Types of paper similar to Japanese were subsequently manufactured in Europe, in the nineteenth century.

However it is almost impossible to ascertain the age of papers made during the centuries in which the composition of paper remained almost unchanged.

Watermarks

Watermarks are an important charactoristic of European paper.

The Italians were the first to use watermarks.

There have been many theories about the possible significance of these designs. Finally, it was concluded that the sign had probably originally served as an indication of the provenance of the paper, or perhaps as a tribute to some important personage, since many watermarks depict regional design, initials, arms or elblems.

Since watermarks are impressed in the paper at regular intervals, they may appear — whole on the engraving, but on the other hand, only part of a watermark may be visible,

if it occurs near the edge of the print, or it could be missing altogether, in the case of a small print.

Research into the earliest watermarks of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries has tended to be more thorough and therefore it is possible to date papers from this period more accurately than those from the following century when, with the increased number of papermills, there was greater likelihood of identical or similar watermarks being produced by different manufacturers, possibly at different times.

Monograms and signatures

The custom of signing prints by hand goes back to about 1880 when the American, James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), began to draw an emblem, in the shape of a butterfly, at the bottom of his etchings, and his brother-in-law, the English surgeon, collector and printmaker, Sir Francis Seymour Haden, signed his in full. Other artists, such as Edgar Degas, sometimes added a signature afterwards, at the request of the owner of the print. From the end of the last century, artists, adapting themselves at first extremely slowly to the new practise, began adding their handwritten signature. The signature normally written in pencil, is generally placed at the bottom of the sheet on the right hand side, usually on the white margin on a level with the serial number, which may be given on the left hand side. The title is usually written in the middle. Some artists always sign, others sign more rarely. Signatures are greatly prized by collectors, sometimes to a greater extent than is justified.

Quality of Prints

The concept of quality assumes different meanings, according to the object referred to. In the case of a work of art it has a particular sense if the work is a painting, and another if it is a drawing, in which the deciding factor is the 'line'. Quality has a different meaning when applied to prints, for several specimens of each print are normally known, sometimes differing one from the other. An assessment of the quality of the print will also take into account the technical procedures used by the artist and will further consider that there is a different set of values to be applied to an old master print, from those applied to a modern one. Moreover, a print of which only one impression is known, has to be judged differently from another of which many sheets exist which seem almost identical but which if the best and the worst examples are compared, nevertheless show characteristics that differ widely, from an aesthetic point of view.

This way of judging the aesthetic qualities of various impressions of the same print, is particularly subjective; it was at one time applied sparingly and prudently, but its importance is now inflated, and it has become a very fashionable attitude, adopted in all circumstances, its meaning therefore ought to be restricted and more rigidly defined. It is in fact quality, above all, which counts in a print; if it does not have it, though it may be a very important work, its value can lie only in the fact that it may be rare. But where there is quality, rarity and good condition, one arrives at the optimum, and at this level a masterpiece of graphic art can take its place alongside any great artistic creation in another medium.

Quality in early prints has today assumed a different meaning, decidedly inferior to that which it used to have. This is inevitable. When many sheets are printed from a plate, the prints become steadily less fine. The number of excellent impressions could never have been high and over the centuries many were lost or damaged and the logical conclusion is that the available number of good quality old master prints is rapidly diminishing.

The quality of an impression depends above all on four factors:-

1) The faultless and even character of the printed line.

2) The care with which the sheet has been printed.

3) The choice of paper, which in any case must always be of the very best quality.

4) The skill with which the plate has been inked, especially when the impression is intended to have certain tonal effects.

In modern prints, especially those of the twentieth century, when both artists and printers have had more advanced techniques at their disposal, quality does not have the same importance as it once had; barring accidents during printing, the sheets

are of uniformly fine quality, a little more brilliant if the impressions have been printed on special paper and decidedly better in the very few proofs pulled before the copper has been steelfaced.

The modern print, however, has become a more rarified thing than it was in the past. In the seventeenth century, a plate was made to bear as many impressions as it could.

The problem of what constitutes an edition of original prints can now only be finally resolved by the individual artist to satisfy his own purposes, according to his own artistic integrity. He might choose to take a few impressions only from each plate, or, if the plate is suitably worked and suitably prepared, to run an edition into the hundreds.

In fact, at present, the practical limit for an edition is usually seventy-five. An engraved copper plate will usually take seventy-five prints, but aquatint, drypoint and mezzotint would need steel facing.

When the edition is completed, the plate is cancelled, scored across with defacing marks.

The modern print is thus intended for a small collectors' market, where rarity is valued and the prints capability, as an original medium, is fully exploited.

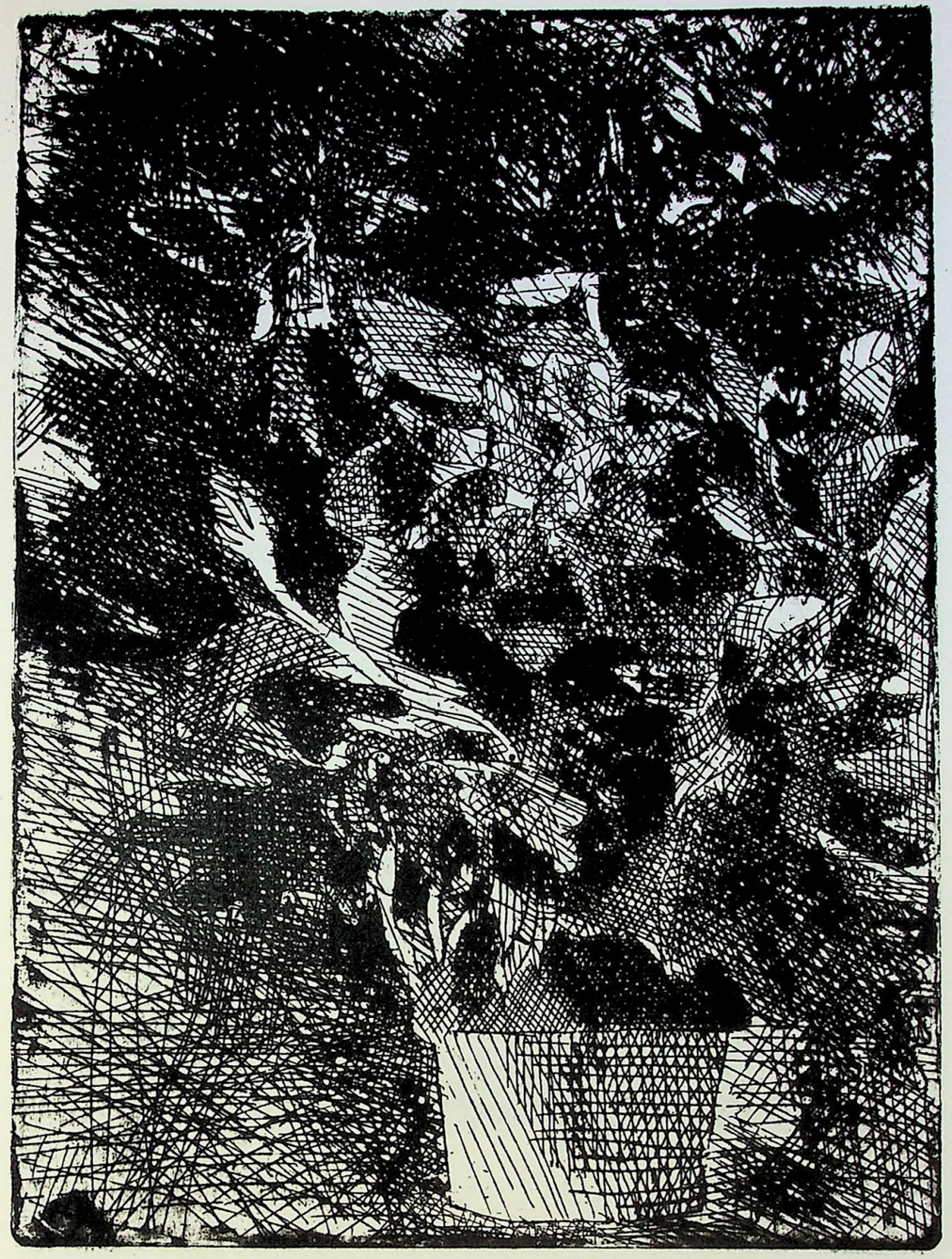

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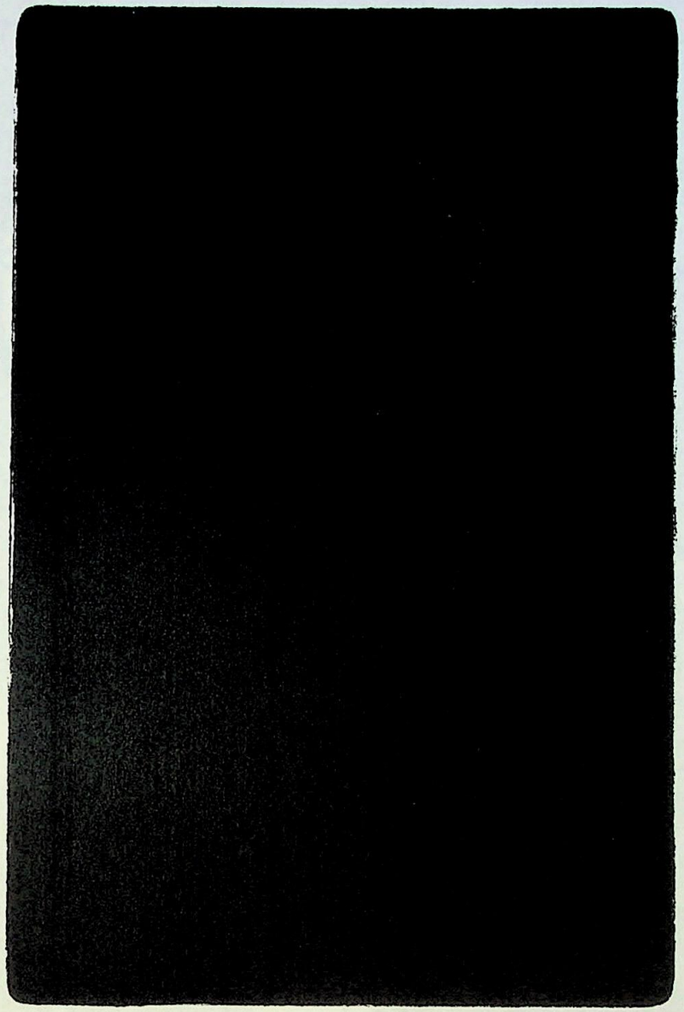
PLATE 4



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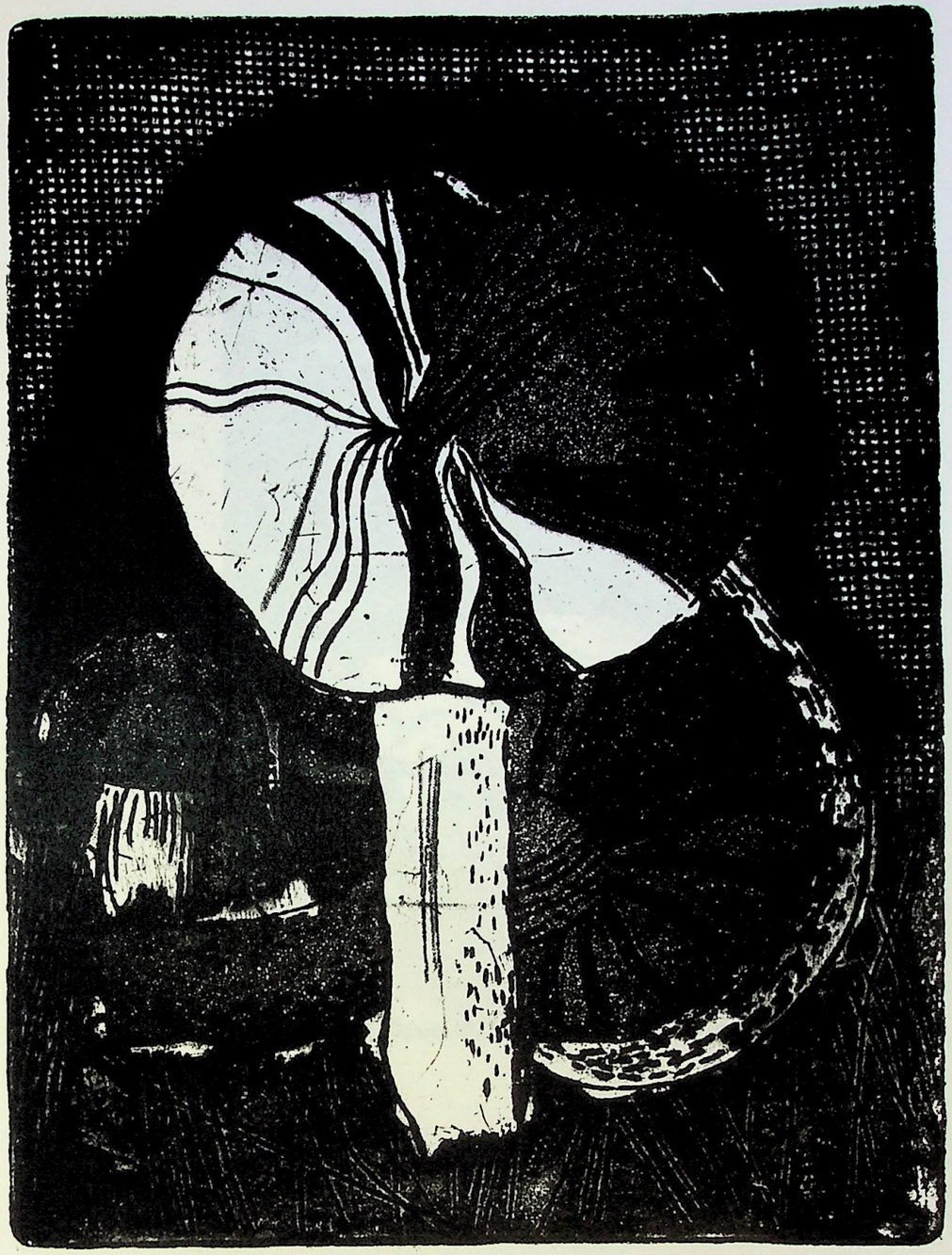
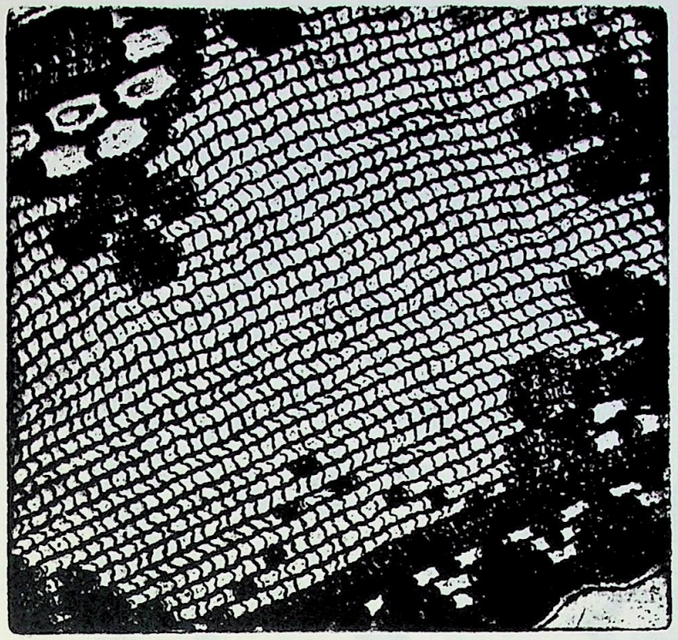


PLATE 6

PLATE 7



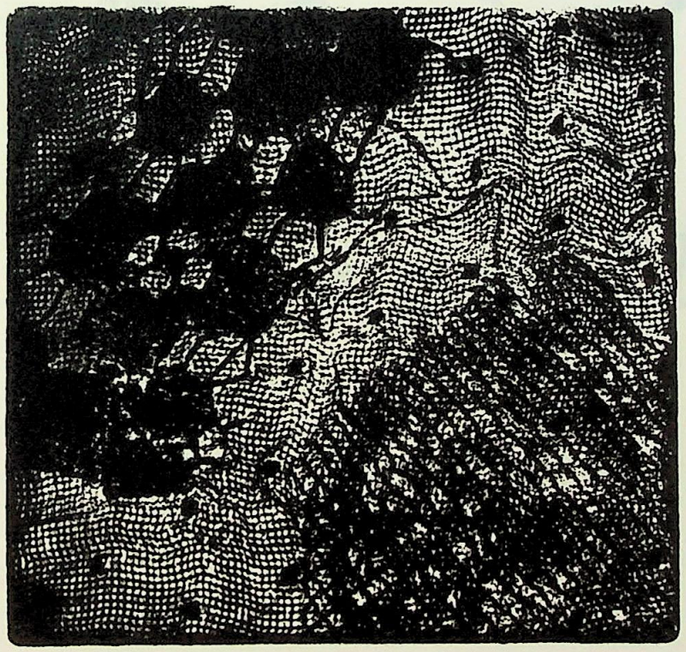


PLATE 9

PLATE 10

Chapter 3

Rembrandt - 17th Century

Throughout the history of the graphic arts, a technique has seldom been identified so completely with one artist of a particular period, as etching is identified with Rembrandt.

He was born in Leyden in 1606. He studied painting until 1624 when he began to work independently.

There is no continunity to his graphic work. It does not consist of carefully planned series. Aside from a few portraits and illustrations, each of his etchings originated in an inner impulse, in the deeply felt need to make that particular print. For this reason, his prints to this day impress one as being spontaneous sketches which contain no more and no less than the essentials, necessary to an understanding of their subject.

The Angel Appearing to the shepherds, 1634 (etching and engraving)

Rembrandt creates a strong alteration of tints between grey and black in this etching.

The foreground area, where the shepherds and cattle are, is one of the lighter sections of the print. Rembrandt uses a pale aquatint alone in this area, which he burnishes away in sections in order to model the forms of the figures.

Behind this is the lush vegetation. Here Rembrandt combines both aquatint and short storkes of the engraving tool to give a textural quality to the vegetation and he adds touches of light to it here and there on the leaves and trembling through the treetops by burnishing away the aquatint. This gives a feeling as though they have been stirred into motion.

The darkest part of the valley landscape Rembrandt creates by retouching the aquatint with the burin. This dark black helps give an evocative night mood to the piece.

The top left corner of the print, where the Angels appear, is another light area, which Rembrandt this time has created by burnishing away the aquatint and engraving cross hatched lines into the plate.

In another of Rembrandt's etchings, - "Christ healing the sick and receiving little children, 1649" (The Hundred Guilder Print), we again find this rich contrast of light and dark.

The lightest area is the foreground. Here Rembrandt has modelled the figures and their clothing by engraving lines into the plate in various stages and by combining these lines with touches of aquatint, which helps add a textural quality to the clothing.

Rembrandt contrasts the dazzling white, in which the figure of Christ and the other figures emerge, against the dark background.

The background Rembrandt has created by combining some cross-hatched, etched lines and aquatint. The darkest parts he achieved by reworking with the burin.

By this use of tone, Christ stands out as the important figure. Rembrandt glorifies the message of Christ, which was above all the significance of "The Hundred Guilder

Print".

Only one other religious etching - "Christ carried to the tomb, 1645", conveys a Bible-inspired atmosphere, similar to that of "The Hundred Guilder Print".

"The Three Crosses, 1653"

In this etching, Rembrandt did the figures entirely with the drypoint, in a sketch-like, almost angular style. With this instrument, he reached directly, as ideas entered his mind. Sometimes, when ink clung to the burred edges, the stroke of the drypoint resemble sweeps of a brush (e.g. the area where the soldiers on horseback are) and where these lines intersect these burred strokes, form great areas of black. In early impressions, the black spots overlap many lines, forming dense shadows in the print, (e.g. to the left of the print). Rembrandt experimented with these strokes. Outside the circle of the crosses, everything had to be in darkness. Rembrandt helped create this darkness by an aquatint. The impression is created that light has slashed open the dark.

Each gesture and each pose has been thought through, and the expressiveness of each figure has been emphasized through line and tone. Rembrandt did not concern himself with contours, which often fall across each other. Everything is in motion, Christ alone, rigid in death, triumphs in the light.

One etching - "Christ Presented to the People, 1655", is a counterpart to "The Three Crosses". It is executed wholly in drypoint and it contains a great amount of detail and gestures, similar to the great "Ecce Homo" by Lucas Van Leyden, which undoubtedly served as a sourse of inspiration for Rembrandt.

In breadth of design and power of line, the "Ecce Homo" appears to go even beyond "The Three Crosses". It is not so engulfed in darkness.

Rembrandt broke the figures loose from the 2D plane, by his use of a few diagonal lines, as well as his use of shadow in the background, which he created by various planes of line.

In another etching - "The dark Presentation in the temple, 1650's", we find one of the miracles of pointmaking. Its tonal splendour is a result of Rembrandt's interplay of etching and drypoint.

In the foreground, to the left, Rembrandt combines etched lines and aquatint to model the two figures. For the other figures, to the right of the print and the step in the centre dividing the two groups, he has used etched lines, retouched with the drypoint burin in the darker sections.

The background space Rembrandt determined by his bold vertical and horizontal lines combined with areas of aquatint, which he retouched with the burin in the darkest parts. The figures as in "The Three Crosses", stand out in the light of the foreground, casting the background in shadow.

"The Three Trees, 1642" (etching)

Rembrandt's landscapes, etched from 1640 - 1645, were constructed of many planes, often enriched with alterations of light and dark. The landscapes, in etching and drypoint, of 1650, 1651 and 1652, however, are much simpler. They usually consist of only one plane, bounded and enclosed by trees or buildings. Their contours are sketched with a few large lines and in the main, the buildings are grouped in such a way as to form a single complex. The simplicity suggests peacefulness and rest. The light is high and the heavy shadows are reminiscent of a summer day.

In landscape, only once did Rembrandt oppose light and dark. This was in the etching "The Three Trees", and the theme of this print - the retreat of a thunderstorm - lent itself admirably to this contrast, which he achieved by using a series of closely - crosshatched lines, combined with aquatint.

The print is a Dutch Arcadia, composed with great deliberation, full of allusions to the pleasures of the out-of-doors.

The sky is so bright against the foreground (where Rembrandt has used cross-hatched lines and aquatint, which he has burnished away in sections to give texture to the landscape) that it casts it into shadow, but Rembrandt through his use of diagonal lines to the top left side of the print and also some roughly-sketched short strokes of the etching needle to the sky in the top edge of the print has given a feeling of movement to the piece - the effect of the wind breaking and driving the clouds away while its lower reaches which he has formed through aquatint, play with the tops of the trees. This was the first and only time Rembrandt gave dramatic content to a landscape etching.

In the landscape - "Trees, Farm Buildings and a Tower, 1640's", the theme of the withdrawing storm from "The Three Trees" is again taken up; but with no dramatic play of light and dark. The vegetation is freshly luminous, with new light, which has been conjured up by Rembrandt's use of simple etched strokes and shading touched with areas of drypoint, as if Bruegal's pen were employed by Rembrandt. Because of the shadow Rembrandt has created, through his use of aquatint and closely-drawn lines, darkened with the drypoint on the cluster of trees to the left and his use of etched lines in the sky, we are given the feeling that the dark clouds are moving away.

One of Rembrandt's most intimate landscapes was his "Landscape with an Obelisk 1650", (etching and drypoint). In this etching, he maintained the open shading of the stone boundry marker, because it formed a happy contrast to the finely-meshed lines he had used for farmhouses and trees. In order to create depth in this etching, he added the drypoint scratches in the foreground.

Rembrandt, working at the same period, in 1651 and 1652, with the simplest possible means - the drypoint alone - created another masterful landscape - "The Vista".

It is only by closely looking at this print that the detail achieved by the various strokes of the drypoint speak out. In this print, some of the strokes made were so deep that the burr they made, picked up a lot of ink, which gives the effect of brushstrokes. This can particularly be seen to the left-hand side of the print.

"Jan Six (1647)" (etching, engraving and drypoint)

The darkness he achieved by his use of aquatint and also line, in combined techniques, suggests a dusky room and an atmosphere of meditation. Each detail is elaborated with etching and engraving. The strokes are short and even. A drypoint has been used for the finishing touches, especially in the darkest areas of the print. The web of lines produces an effect superficially resembling mezzotint. He burnishes away sections of the aquatint to add white highlights to some of the objects in the room which make a contract to their dark surround. In spite of detail, there is a great harmony between space and figure.

"The Phoenix (1658)" (etching and drypoint)

In a ferocious, nearly singing light, (the effect of which Rembrandt has achieved with the help of the diagonal lines) Rembrandt depicts his own genius rising from the grave, as a phoenix who triumphs over satanic envy, represented by the overthrown figure in the foreground.

Rembrandt has created an allusion of space through his clever use of shading. This can be seen especially in the figure thrown towards us in the foreground. The darker lines he created using the drypoint burin.

"Woman bathing her feet" -

In the last years of his life Rembrandt etched a series of nude subjects in which he showed through his use of line to create tones and form that etching was better able to cope with the pecular problems presented by the pictorial respresentation of the naked body and its atmospheric envelope (which he created with the help of an aquatint) than any of the then known graphic media. Unfortunately no one since his time has been able to repeat the demonstration.

After looking at these etchings we can see that Rembrandt combined different techniques in his work.

The words written by the nineteenth century French critic, Thore - Burge, still form the most trenchant summary of his art:-
'Rembrandt is wholly eternal, mysterious, profound, unseizable and you must fall back on yourself. He is never predictable, you do not know, you are silent and meditate".

PLATE 11

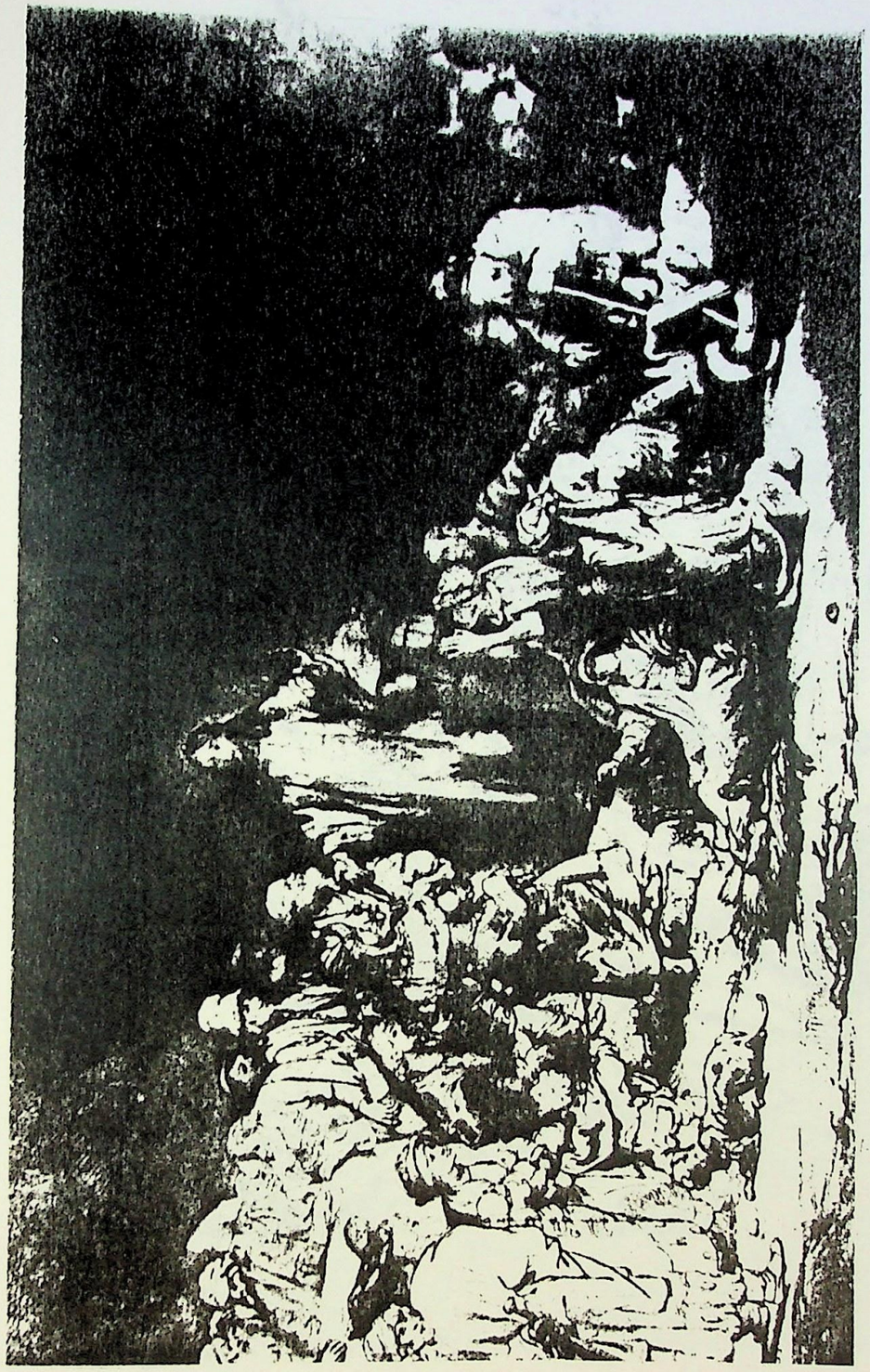


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PLATE 12

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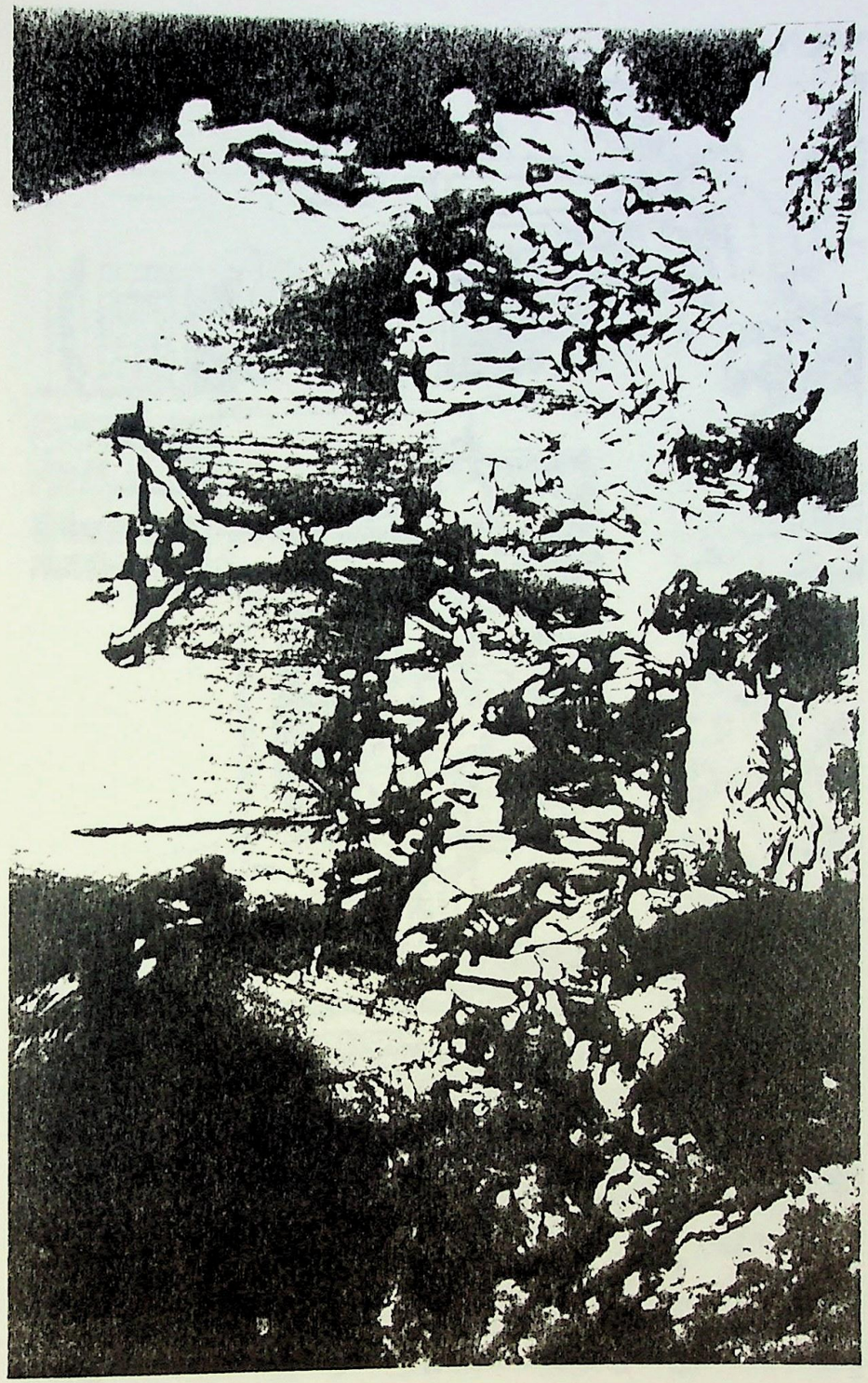
(51)

PLATE 13



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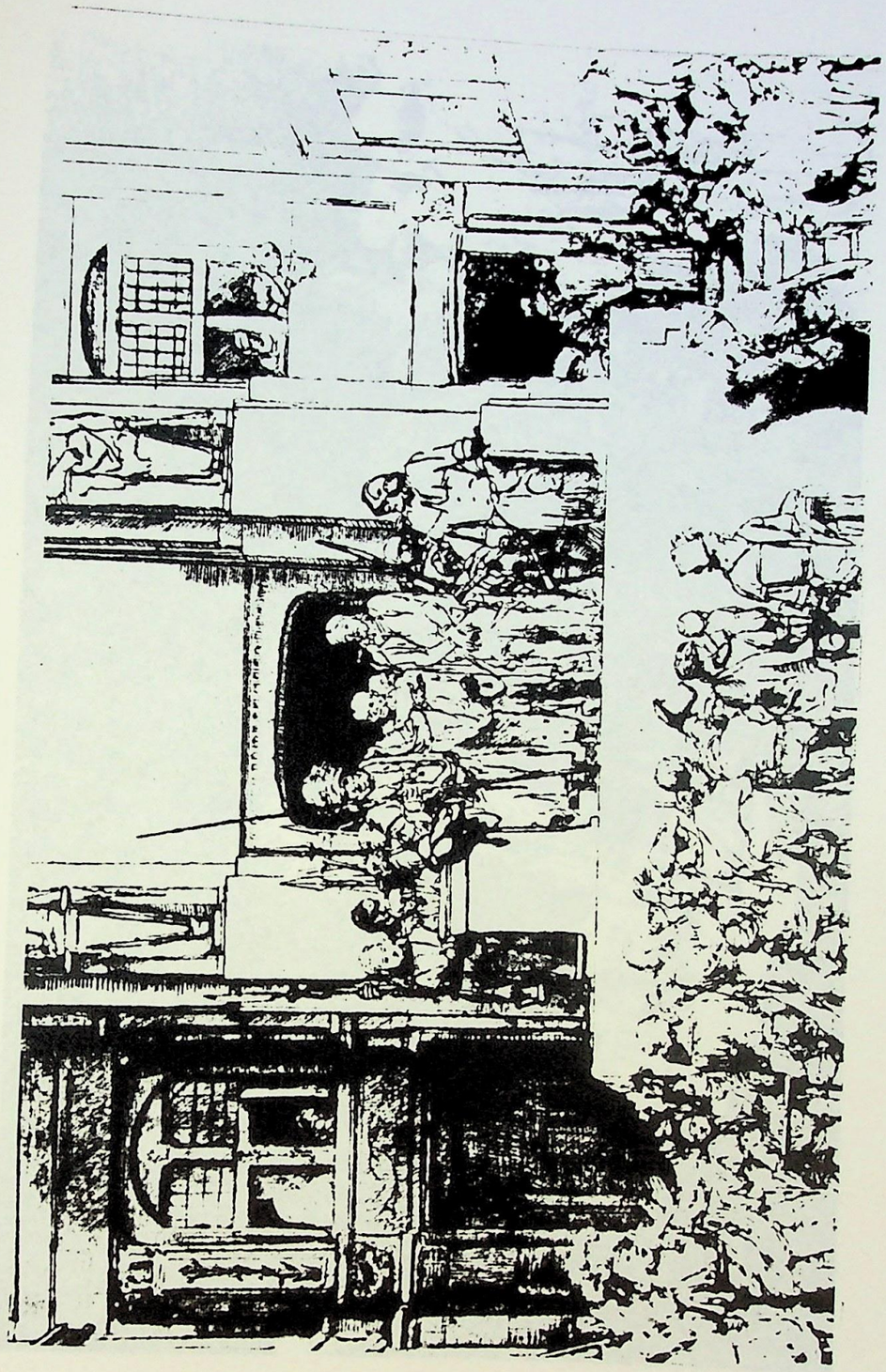

PLATE 15

PLATE 16

PLATE 18

PLATE 19

(57)

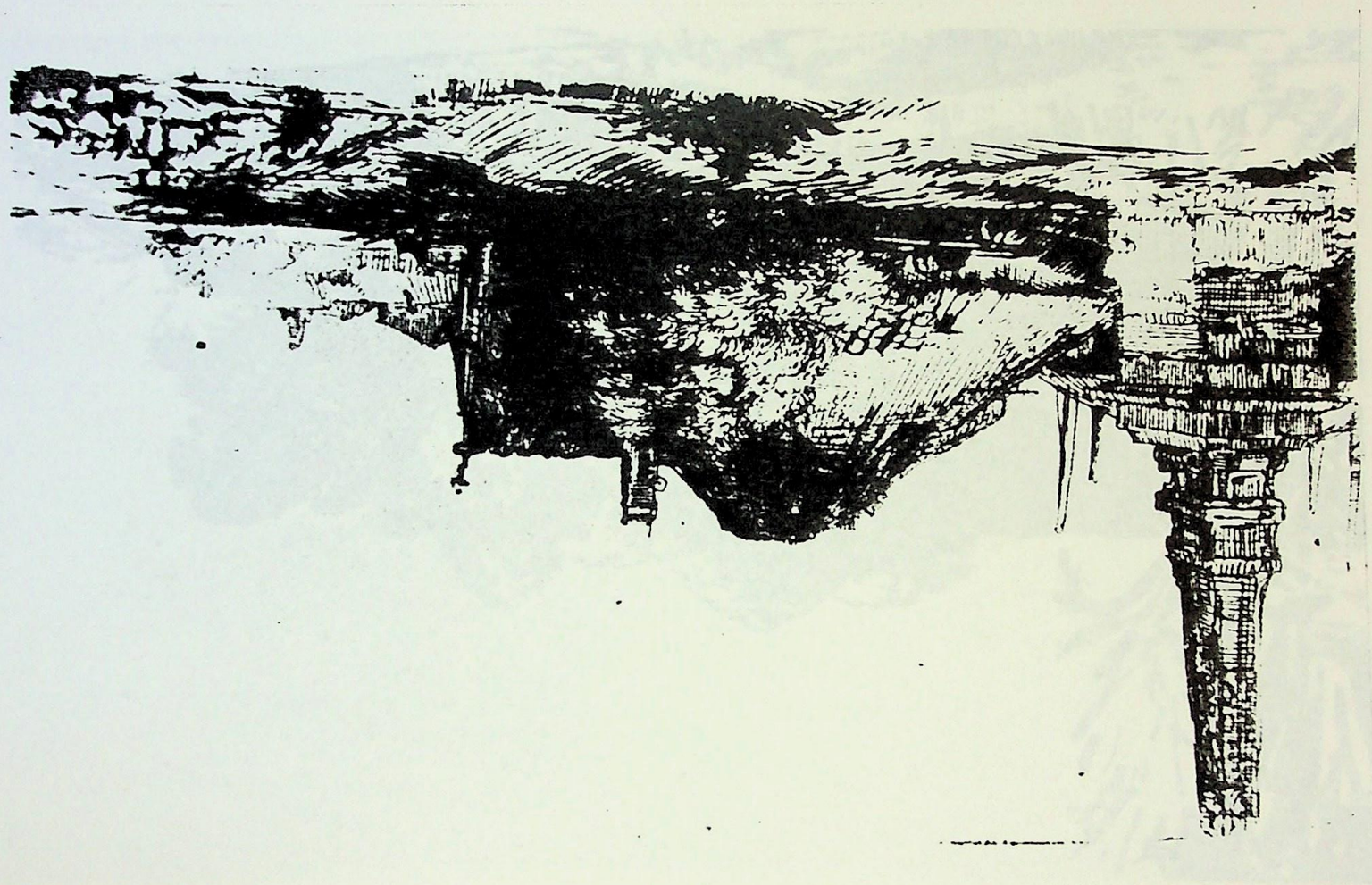

PLATE 19

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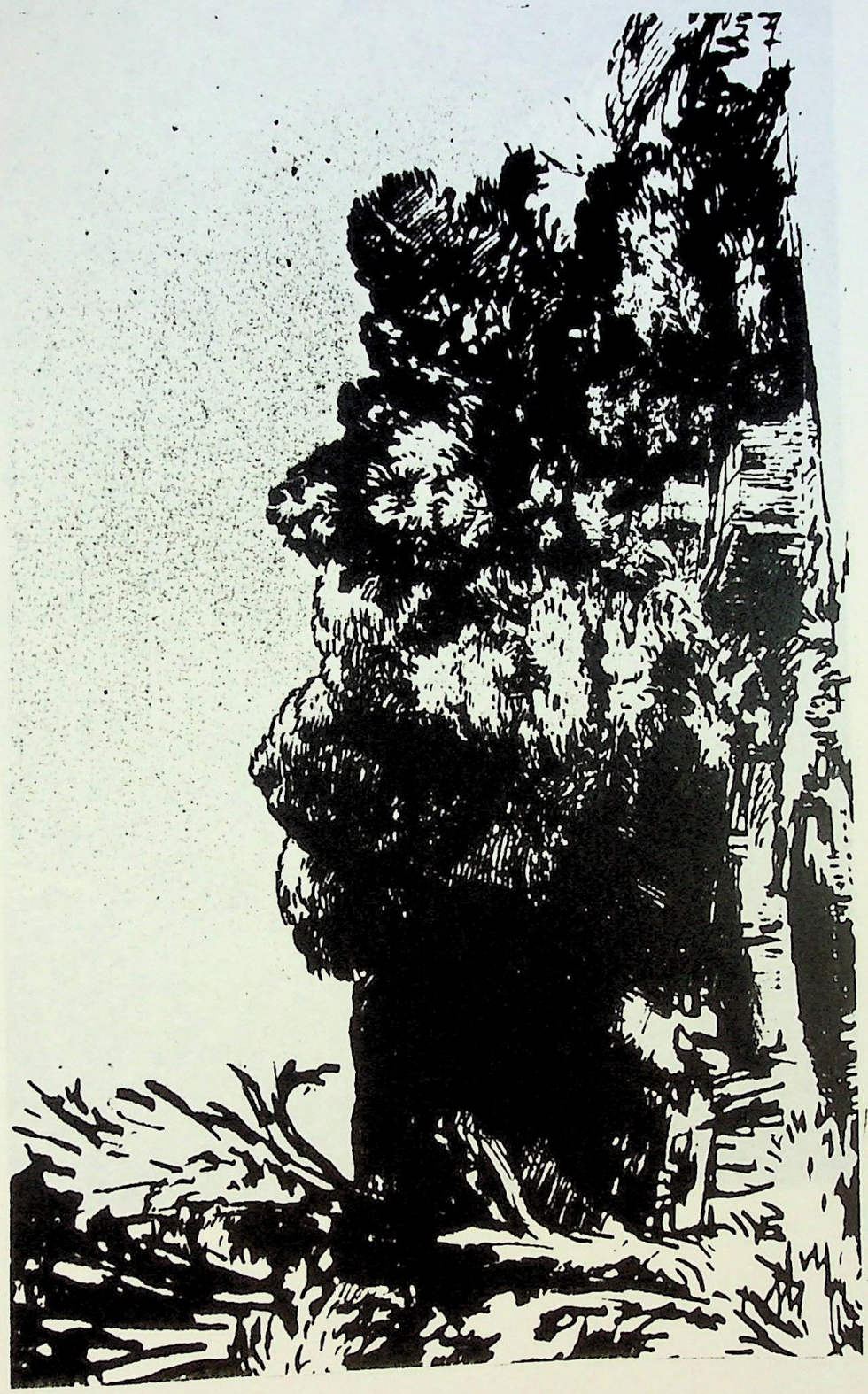
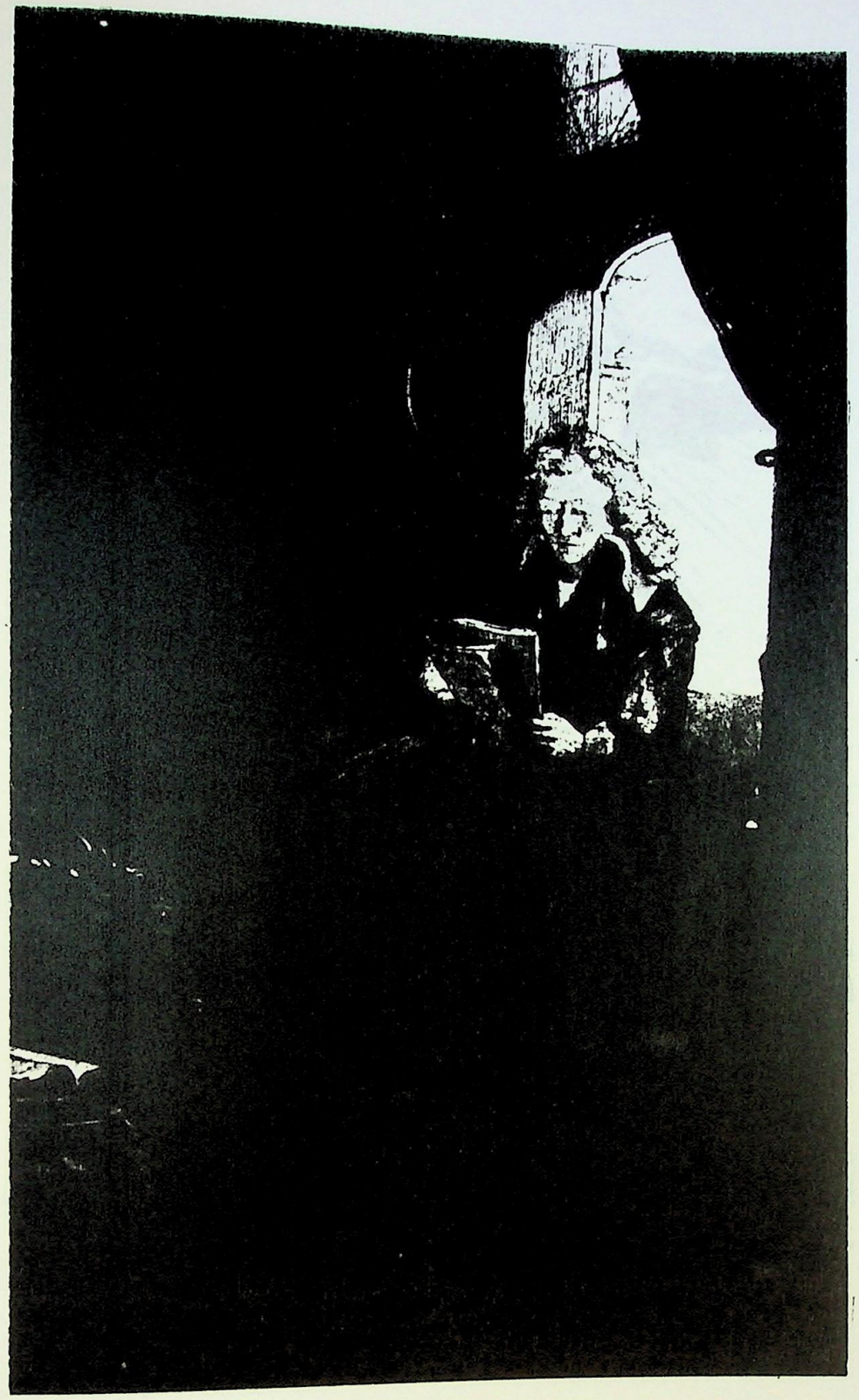


PLATE 20



61

PLATE 23

Goya - 18th Century

Goya was born in Saragossa in 1748, where he worked until 1775 when he moved to Madrid. He later moved to Bordeaux where he remained until his death in 1828.

Possibly the earliest of all his prints is "The Flight into Egypt" dating from before 1778.

"The Caprices" (1793 - 1796) (etchings)

The fame of his series of eighty etchings "The Caprices" has come to surpass, at certain moments, the artist's paintings themselves.

He made drawings which turned into acid comments on human vices and follies, often aimed at Madrid Society of the day, not even sparing the members of the Clergy. Out of these drawings grew the great set of plates.

The technique used for "The Caprices" plates was a mixed process, combining etching and aquatint, in uniformly flat shades, frequently very intense, particularly in background areas. Varying degrees of etching and aquatint model the clothing, figures and accessories. Areas of light were executed with the burnisher. In this way, Goya obtained effects of colour and daubing much more rapidly than would have been possible with etching alone.

This can be seen in etchings like "The Pitcher Broke", "Tooth Hunting", "And so they kidnapped her", and also in "They already have seats", and "They must fit tightly".

A certain dynamism is habitually offered in the compositions, with two or more persons in the foreground and action so immediately real. In "The Pitcher Broke" one can almost feel the spanking the child is getting. The figures stand out from the background. Goya has etched short strokes into the plate to model the figures and basket and to add a few objects including the broken pitcher in the foreground, which help create a space. The background space he creates by using a pale aquatint and also by burnishing out certain areas to form the clothes hanging on the line. The whiteness of the clothes on the line and the dark skirt of the woman, form a good contrast in this piece which helps bring the two figures forward.

In "Tooth Hunting", the two figures also stand out from the background, because Goya has this time burnished out certain areas of their clothes in contrast to the darker tones in the rest of the plate. In "They must fit tightly", Goya again treats this plate in the same way, by using the burnisher to highlight the two figures in the foreground and he adds touches of line here and there in the background. He uses little line work in these two plates just discussed compared to his use of line work in the other three etchings already mentioned.

In "And so they kidnapped her", there is a strong contrast between the dark background and the figures in the foreground where he uses an aquatint and lines combined. One can almost feel the grip the kidnappers have on the girl, as she screams in terror. The dark tone helps create this dramatic sense of horror - the faces of the kidnappers are hidden by this evil darkness.

In "They already have seats", the two figures with the chairs stand out from the dark laughing figures in the background. Goya uses a lot of line in this particular etching, to build up the darker tone and he uses the burnisher in the two foreground figures.

In "The Caprices", the themes vary from for example themes like those of the etchings just discussed, to other social and moral scenes of sorcery, of the gallows, etc. There is a grotesque feeling about some of the compositions, for example, in the print, "What will he die of?" Here an ass acts the role of Doctor, taking the pulse of a man ill in bed.

Many of the prints clearly reveal a pointed imagination, for example, in his "The dream of reason produces monsters".

The most dramatic prints are those that are simplest in appearance, though in them, the human being is presented with most bestial features, as in "It's Hot", and also in some of the other etchings mentioned.

"The Caprices", because of this thematic synthesis and creative technique have become one of the most universially known examples of Spanish Art.

The Disasters of War

The next series of eighty-two prints was "The Disasters of War".

Sixty-eight of these refer not to the War, but rather the suffering of man. The remaining fourteen are of political or social intent.

With regard to technique, Goya, on this occasion, preferred the process of etching, which he strenghened by expressive retouchings with drypoint. He also obtained effects with aquatint.

Moments are caught during a dramatic incident as in his "Madre Infeliz". Since the time of Rembrandt, no artist has so drawn the pathos and the misery of life or came to true grips with it. In this etching he uses a dark aquatint in the background. In the lower section of the background he has added short horizontal strokes. The bright figures stand out, in contrast to the background. Goya has combined aquatint and line in order to model their clothing. Their hair he has darkened by using the drypoint burin. One can almost feel the weight of the womans body and the strain on the men as they try to lift her.

Goya did two other series of prints.

"The Tauromaguio", series (1816) was based on the development of bullfighting in Spain and the technique Goya employed is like "The Disasters" with etching dominant. Intense shadows cover the background or serve as contrast to the model forms. Some of the compositions are astounding for purity of drawing and originality of sense of space.

"The Disparates" (Proverbs) series (1817-'18) is thematically a continuation of "The Caprices". However, in form it is like "The Disasters". In all, contrasts of light and shade are employed with greater intensity. Beauty is sought and is heightened by the matt quality of the shades.

Among his loose prints is "The Magnificent Seated Colossus". The fearsome visionary character of this subject is enhanced by its unusual technique. Goya used mezzotint basically in this print and then he scraped sections of it away to achieve the highlights in the image. The moon, which cast a light down on the Giant's features and back, stands out from the sky at the top of the plate.

The lower section of the Giant's body is in shadow - a good contrast to the section of the sky behind it.

Goya once remarked that "Nature, Valazquez and Rembrandt had been his teachers".

PLATE 24

67

PLATE 25

PLATE 26

59

PLATE 27

PLATE 28

71

PLATE 29

72

PLATE 30

73

PLATE 31

Madre infeliz!, by Goya
$6\frac{3}{32} \times 8\frac{2}{32}$

PLATE 32

Francisco Goya, *Y no hay remedio*, from the *Disasters de la Guerra*, c. 1815–20

PLATE 33

PLATE 34

"Disparate Furioso" (No. 6 Los Proverbios)
Etching and Aquatint 8½" x 12¼".
Collection Jacob Landau

Francisco Goya

PLATE 35

Picasso - 20th Century

Picasso was one of the most famous artists of the twentieth century. He was born in Spain in 1881.

Until the late nineteen-twenties he was at best a spasmodic printmaker. Classical motifs dominated the prints of this period.

Picassos approach to etching was unusaul because of the simple use of line throughout his works.

"The Frugal Meal" (1904)
This was Picasso's second attempt at etching.

It is quite large, a foot and a half high. Weirdly long tapering fingers, a motif picked up and repeated by the plucked - in chemise and scarf, are the expressive highlights within a taut outline, that makes shoulders and elbows as gaunt as the faces of the misereux. That outline which Picasso created by his use of the etching needle, is played against a repeated rectangle tilted at another plane, the tablecloth, and is balanced and completed by the roundnesses which at one point become the profile from the plate to the glass and the bottle rising to the crown of the hat, while from there the long arms shelter the fullness of the woman's breasts.

Picasso shows a clever use of aquatint in this print also which helps create folds in the tablecloth and at the same time creates the three-dimensional effect of the bread plate and also the glasses and bottle. He scrapes away the aquatint in small areas on the bottle and glasses to add highlights and at the same time to help achieve the texture of glass. The darkness of the hat and the woman's hair created by an aquatint and lines combined make a strong contrast to the paleness of the tone behind their heads. As well as the already mentioned strong outlines of the etching needle, Picasso also uses short closely-etched vertical and horizontal strokes in the background area to the left and also in the table in the foreground. This adds texture to the plate and by helping too to build up more tones, helps create a foreground, middle distance and background space.

"The Dance", 1904

In this, Picasso goes to the trouble of making a drypoint engraving, in order to jeer at his own circus characters. This puzzling and unpleasant line drawing in drypoint seems to recede from the classic (as in the pose of the figure to the left) to the oriental (the three figures in the foreground) to the bestial (the background figures).

To me, it is a sour and negative piece - Picasso was not concerned with beauty. There are no distractions to take from the figures in the piece.

There is a great comparison between this print and his "Circus Family" of 1905. Although technically they are the same, Picasso using the fine line of the etching needle in both, "The Circus Family" is a happy, peaceful print compared to "The Dance".

"The Vollard Suite" (1930 - 1937)

This was a group of one hundred etchings. The suite is not illustrational in a direct sense. Half the plates represent the sculptor in his studio. A quarter show nude women, bullfights, circuses and a winged bull. Some are concerned with Rembrandt and a rape and some have the Minotaur as their subject.

If we look at the many plates which have to do with sculpture in the suite, they seem, above all, to be concerned with the marmoreal, making a clean and pure line out of mass, as in "Vollard Suite No. 38", for example.

There are constant references to Greek Roman and Neo-Classical Sculpture. (Examples - Vollard Suite No. 38 and No. 57). It has been remarked that the cooley - incised line of ingres can be found but there is also an influence from Rembrandt and an influence from Goya, in the aquatints.

Since Manet there were two rival traditions of etching. One was of sooty washes and floods alternated with brilliant whites, this was Goya based, (can be seen in Vollard Suite No. 27) and the other one was derived from the linear methods and crosshatching of Rembrandt. (Can be seen in Vollard Suite No. 82).

Like Manet, Picasso saw etching as a medium to be experimented with. Thus, some plates, like Vollard Suite No. 59, seem to have been scratched around in an experimental mood.

There are many mocking or serious points about art in the Vollard Suite. In Vollard Suite No. 82, the four nudes with a sculptoral head has references to Fontainebleau art and in Vollard Suite No. 58, we see the artist at work in his studio; before his subject. She is fully modelled but he is represented in a linear style and appears to be drawing rather than carving.

In some of the plates, which are of sexual situations, the drawings are explicit and representational.

In Vollard Suite No. 27, a fawn unveils a sleeping woman. Gora achieved the tones through his use of aquatint, which he burnished away in the lightest areas. The fawn enters a loggia, the light streaming in behind him. He raises the curtain with one hand, allowing the light to fall upon the unsuspecting sleeper, thus creating a sense of great dramatic effect.

Picasso followed a more conservative path in his printmaking than in other media, but his attitude towards the making of prints was important to the future of the printed image.

The easy availability of prints has made them subjects of constant study and discussion, even from the time of Rembrandt.

PLATE 36

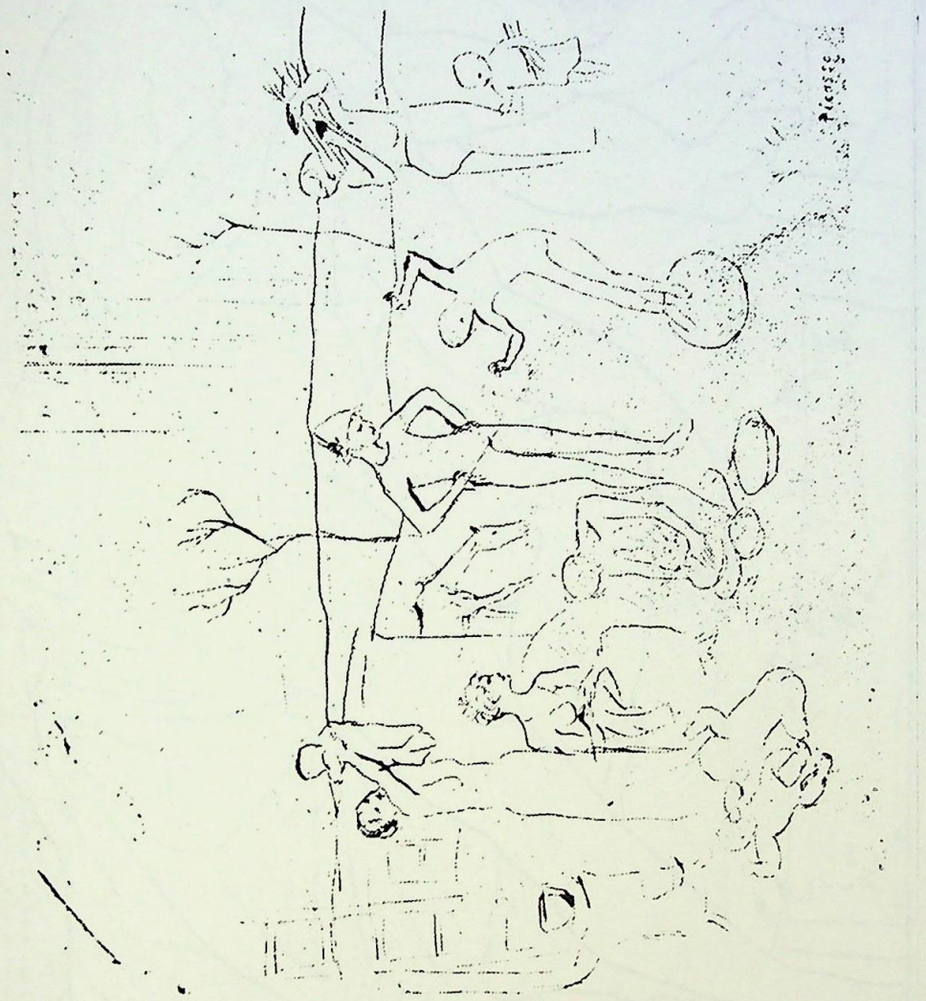


PLATE 38

PLATE 39

PLATE 40

PLATE 41

(87)

PLATE 42

PLATE 43

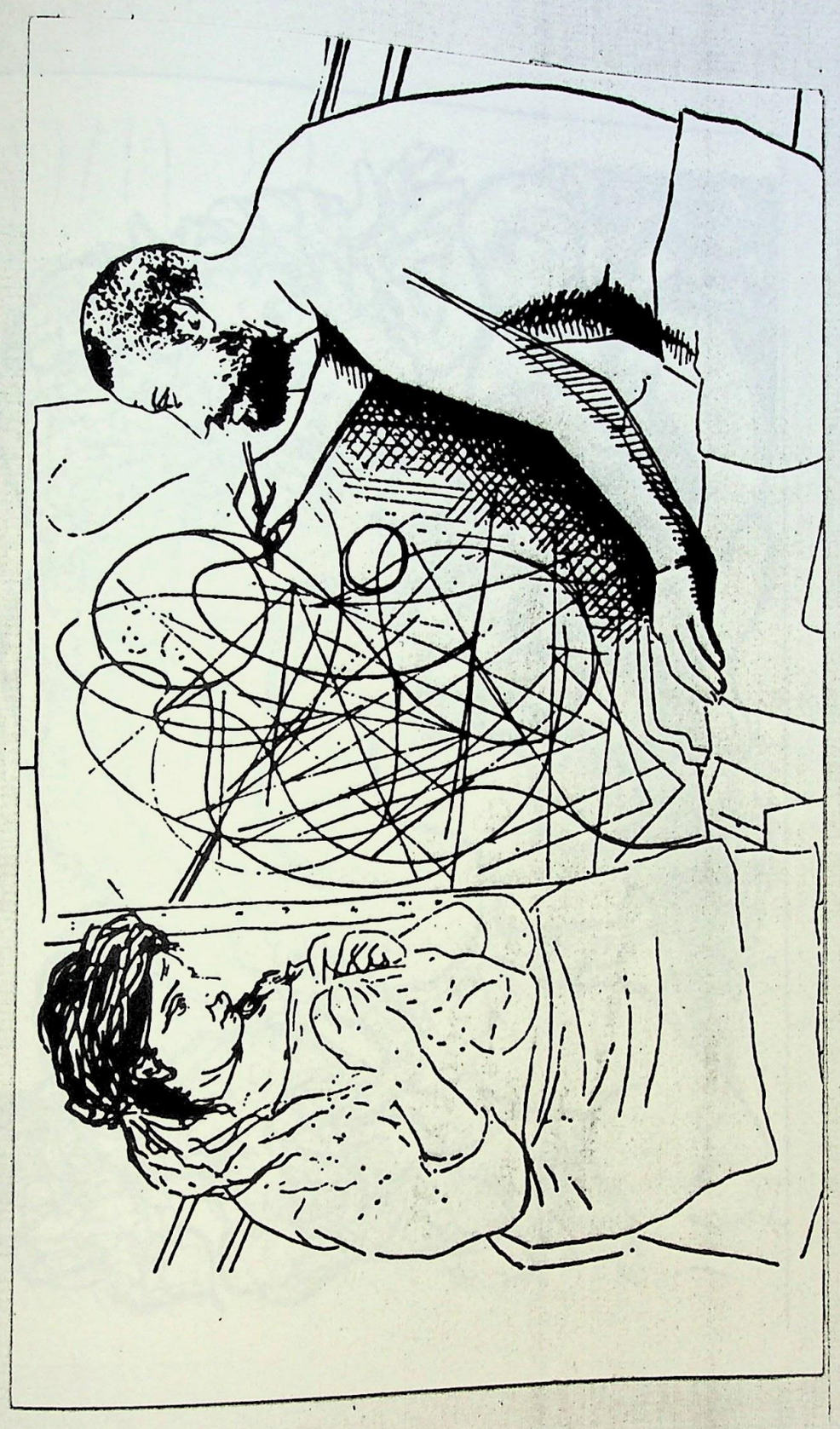


PLATE 44

PLATE 45

PLATE 46

Chapter 4

The Etching Revival

The origins of the so-called 'Etching Revival' which dominated the second half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century lay in the landscapes of Jacque Daubigny and the work of other artists e.g. Jean-Francois Millet (1814-1875), Camille Corot (1796-1875) and Theodore Rousseau (1812-1867) related to the Barbizon school made in the years from about 1840. Another influential figure was Charles Meryon.

The increasing interest in etching resulted in the foundation of the Societe des Aquafortistes in 1862, which marked the true beginning of the Etching Revival.

Specialist publishers sprang up and printers, such as Auguste Delatre, perfected all the tricks of artistic inking. The best prints included those of Manet Pissarro and Degas. Even the reproductive engravers' dignity was shaken by a new breed of reproductive etchers, who took advantage of etchings new prestige. Partially as a reaction against photography, and the increasing elaboration of finish and mechanical execution in engraving, etching was revived as a medium for the direct execution, by the artist, of his own designs. Despite the success of a few men, the quality of etching declined in the final decades of the century, when better work was increasingly to be found in drypoint.

The fashion was transported from Frances to Britain by James McNeill Whistler. From Whistler dates the custom of signing the print in pencil, additional evidence that it is no longer considered a mechanical product, but the original work of an artist's mind and hand.

A distinguished tradition of artists' etching had in fact flourished, early in the century and, had been kept alive by members of the Etching club. The most famous of these is Samuel Palmer, although Whistler was the most influential etcher of his time.

The death of *reproductive engraving by the end of the century, freed the artist to explore the full creative potential of the print, creating ever-new richness of techniques.

The unprecedented popularity of etching was a phenomenon found everywhere in the early decades of this century.

*Reporoductive engraving

This was a medium in which professional engravers copied the designs of other artists. This led to elaborate codification of linear systems and marks in attempts to find a means of translating the tonal range of a painting; the manipulative difficulty of the craft required a long apprenticeship.

The decline in the print market

Printmaking seemed to have taken a propitious course but then came the decline in the Print Market; from 1929 it became extremely difficult for artists to find buyers for their work. Governments and municipalities as well as private individuals, saw their budgets dwindling, while the number of unemployed rose by millions. The artists, abandoned by the public, as they had been in 1850 with the advent of photography, were forced to work for themselves alone.

Once free of the public printmakers began to do increasingly experimental work.

From 1939 to the present

The second world war caused a considerable generation gap, owing to the occupation of many countries, the internment of millions of people for up to six years, and the destruction and crime which affected virtually the whole of Europe. There were few war artists, one exception being Henry Moore.

The new market for prints

An entirely different market for prints grew up after the second world war. A different type of collector came into being. The collector who owned about a thousand carefully mounted prints filed in specially made cabinets disappeared and had been replaced by a new and varied public. The new rich looked down on prints because they were not expensive enough individually and not immediate investments like paintings. On the other hand prints were bought by interior decorators, who hung them in the modern homes of their creation. They were also bought by young people to decorate their rooms.

They were sought by museums, especially in the United States.

The method of selling prints was changing too. In place of the specialized dealers, who nevertheless retained a valuable stock, galleries and clubs of all kinds were selling prints. The market was not glutted with prints, but was much more busy than before the war.

Graphic Art in black and white was once believed to hold little interest for the museum-going public. That belief has been shattered by the public itself, which has enthusiastically responded to numerous great exhibitions of drawings held in various countries, in Europe within the past quarter-century, but particularly in recent years. These exhibitions included an exhibition of contemporary British Drawings, held in the Henderson Gallery in Edinburgh in 1978.

"The Finest Drawings from The Museum of Angers in France" was an exhibition held in the Heim Gallery in London in 1977 and the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool in 1978.

The Tate Gallery in London held an exhibition of Graphic work in 1973 and the British Arts Council also held an exhibition in 1983.

Much less has been said and done about European prints of earlier centuries. It would be unfair, however, to say that they have been neglected, as there still are print collectors of taste and knowledge and the print rooms of our great museums are consistently building up their collections.

It would be unrealistic to deny that certain prejudices and suspicions exist about prints even now.. There prejudices stem from different causes and experiences. First of all, no other branch of art suffers quite as much from a muddled terminology. There is no law which proclaims that the noun 'print' could not be used for any kind of printed picture design. It is being used by photographers, by the textile industry and by publishers of photo-mechanical reproductions - even though some of the latter are to be recommended for using the term 'reproduction'. For this reason, the term 'Graphic Art' has gained in popularity, probably under the influence of German usage,

where the equivalent term 'Graphics' has been used for prints here and there in this country.

However, for most of us, Graphic Art includes drawings as well as printmaking, while book design and advertising design have already made strong claims on that term.

Finally, there exists that widespread misconception that in prints, the creative momentum is impeded and the spontaneity sacrifices, to the technical requirement of printing. Even if the primary purpose of printmaking is to repeat a composition as exactly and as often as possible, great artists, e.g., Stanley William Hayter (1901-), have chosen the print medium for purely artistic reasons, in order to bring to life innervisions which could not be expressed with the same intensity in any other medium.

Modern Etching Techniques

The development of the Etching Process since the end of World War 11 has been almost limitless in inventiveness of image and exploration of technique.

The incised line of the etching plate yields a raised line of ink in the impression that has a crisp, intense and forceful character. This quality has been appreciated by artists who are fine draughtsmen and is one of the reasons why some artist-printmakers so love the etching process.

The process of aquatint, which can produce a wide variety of greys, ranging from delicate light washes to rich deep blacks, are indispensible to an artist who needs tonality in his work.

With Mezzotint, few contemporary artists have the time to rock a plate long enough to produce the velvety black impression so characteristic of the best work.

A deeply-bitten aquatint will approximate but not equal the dense, rich black of the mezzotint and several artists have exploited the shortcut to good effect.

Peter Milton is one artist who has used the lift-ground method with extraordinary skill and patience.

This process enables one to use the plate for the liveliest, most autographic brushed line or mass, that one can produce. It is a direct process - if one paints a black line on the plate one gets a black line on the print.

Milton uses photographs to draw from. He does not use photo engraving aids, and, while this is impractical, he finds it curiously satisfying. While speaking about

his "October Piece 1" he said, - "it must be said that this approach as I am using it, is probably as antithetical as can be conceived to the more-or-less contemporary printmaking concepts, which emphasize openness to materials and to the medium itself. As much as anyone, I would hate to see such procedures lead us back to the kind of frozen tedium that afflicted printmaking for so many years before its present health".

Colour etching

It is possible to ink a single etching plate in many colours to create a colour print. It is also possible to print several plates each inked in different colours, one after the other, in register, on the same impression. There are a number of other ways to create colour prints with the intaglio method, for example, chine colle. If one wants to combine the unique quality of the drawn image and the embossed line, with colour, then one finds the intaglio techniques well worth mastering. Many artists use several techniques to achieve colour in the prints, such as combining intaglio processes with screenprinting or lithography.

New Etching techniques

The techniques I am about to discuss all reflect the impact of technology, - new products, new material, new equipment and therefore technical experimentation encourages artistic growth and shapes a new kind of imagery.

The Collegraph

The collegraph is a new printmaking technique, which has been appearing in exhibitions with great regularity in the last few years. The collegraph, as generally defined, is a print of a collage of a wide variety of materials glued together on masonite, cardboard or a metal plate. It differs from the cardboard relief print in that it is

printed as an intaglio plate, a combined intaglio plate.

The innovating experiments with collage and assemblage by the early twentieth century French artists such as Picasso, did much to open the way for the later printmakers use of unorthodox materials. This freedom of concept and use of materials had a direct influence on many contemporary printmakers.

The Norwegian printmaker, Rolf Nesch was one of the first artists to use an assembled plate in the 1930's. His material was primarily metal, and his work is described as a metal collage, with some forms soldered in place and other forms cut and assembled unadhered, for printing.

The collagraph seems to have evolved directly from the concepts of Nesch, with the addition of more flexible materials.

The development of the collagraph grew out of the use of the cardboard and paper relief print. A variety of materials, such as textured papers, cloth, lace, metal objects and sand, were glued to the relief plates to develop surface variations. The tonal nuances were interesting and rewarding. Later artists began to work with etching, - they felt the need to use the intaglio in a more flexiable manner. One artist, John Ross, began to experiment with plates made out of cardboard, paper and cloth, that would relate to the image.

Commerical Printing and etching combined

In search of new imagery, etchers e.g. Virginia Holt are turning to the ready-printed material of the commerical presses. Two available sources are decals and magazine pictures. The easiest way to incorporate commercial printing into a hand-made etching is to use it in a collage. The etcher cuts out a magazine picture and

pastes it on the etching paper. Then he overprints it with a regular metal plate inked in intaglio or relief. The collage technique allows the etcher to introduce colour easily into the work. The possibilities of combining commercial and hand-made printing in the collage technique allows for an increased range in the juxtaposition of images.

Decal designs are printed in inks, lacquers, varnishes, or plastics on special paper coated with an adhesive that loosens in water so that the paper or plastic on which the design is printed slides away from the paper backing and can be pasted on the printing surface. Decals can be effectively used with intaglio-printed metal plates.

Transfer type, another commercial product, can be place on the plate or directly on the paper. These plastic letters and numbers come on a sheet of wax paper and can be transferred simply by rubbing with a burnisher. Another commercially printed source for collages or decals, is printed materials with gummed backing. Such as postage stamps, bumper stickers, and Christmas seals.

Sculptural Etchings

The sculptural print, in my opinion, is a challenge to etchers who wish to explore the interaction between printmaking and sculpture in order to establish a bridge between the relatively two-dimensional world of the etcher and the three-dimensional world of the sculptor. Sculptural etchings can range from deep embossment to etchings in the round. Some etchers want to create sculptoral etchings because they feel their designs are more effective when they are three-dimensional.

From the beginning, by the very method by which the plate is made, inked, and printed, the soft surface of the paper shows at least a slight emboss, and all embossment is relatively sculptural. When transferred to paper, incised lines - engraved or bitten - leave a slight ridge on the paper, made partly because the paper is pushed into the crevices of the metal and partly by the small deposit of ink that is laid along the ridge. When the etcher allows the acid to bite deeper lines and valleys in the metal, then, of course, the damp etching paper is raised even more as it is rolled through the press. If the etcher permits the acid to bite clear through the metal, or gouges or drills through the metal, then the embossed areas on the paper will be still more pronounced.

The limits of embossment are reached at that point where the paper can expand no more without tearing. Therefore, for deep embossment, the thickness, softness, and, pliability of the paper or other printing surface, are important.

Although there are many excellent commercially-made etching papers, some etchers have ordered special handmade papers that are extra thick and pliable, giving them an increased capacity for stretching.

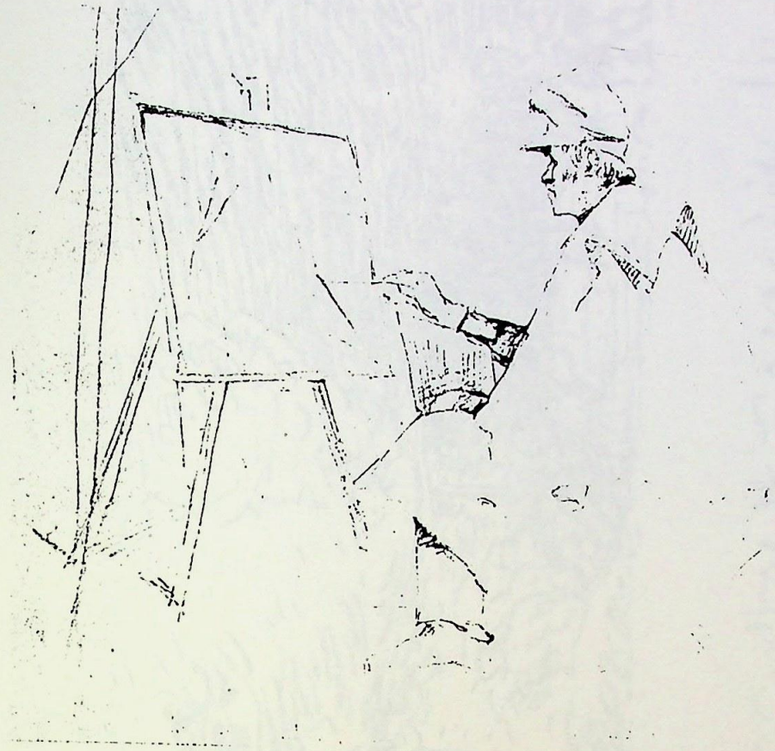
Some etchers e.g. Omar Rayo believe that embossing can be done more effectively on a hydraulic press than on an etching press because of the direct vertical pressure of the hydraulic press. Hydraulic presses suitable for printing etchings are somewhat rare, however, and a few etchers have designed and supervised the building of their own. The advantage is that much thicker materials can be embossed and printed, either inked or uninked. When single embossed plates are printed, first the plate, then the dampened paper, and finally the blankets are laid on top of one another on the press. When two embossing plates are used (a positive and a negative), the paper is slipped between them and no blankets are used.

An ordinary hand-operated letterpress can be used as a substitute for a hydraulic press, provided it is large enough and forceful enough to take a satisfactory impression.

Another kind of sculptural print is the cut-and-folded or creased-and-folded print. These can be either high-relief prints or free standing, sculptural prints. First an impression is taken by inking the plate in the ordinary way and printing it on flat paper or a paper substitute. Then it is cut, creased, folded, glued, or stapled until it has been shaped into a three-dimensional form. Often high-relief prints have to be supported on a cardboard or masonite backing and made rigid with cardboard or other stiff materials so they will maintain their folded form. When high-relief prints are matted or framed, special demands of protection must be met. Often such prints are framed in deep plexiglass boxes.

When the etcher e.g. Shiro Ikegawa decides to work in the round, he must first print on a flat surface in the usual way, and then, after the ink is dry, cut and fold the paper or paper substitute into a free-standing, three-dimensional shape. The etcher may choose to print on a surface other than paper; aluminium foil, vinyl, plastic, wood veneer, latex or metal. Each of these surfaces has special characteristics in taking an impression and responding to shaping.

It is possible that more printmakers in the future will explore the potentials of the three-dimensional print and find new materials and invent new techniques that will lead to the production of artistically-satisfying prints.



Camille Corot *Stamati Bulgari c.* 1835–40 Pencil drawing

PLATE 47

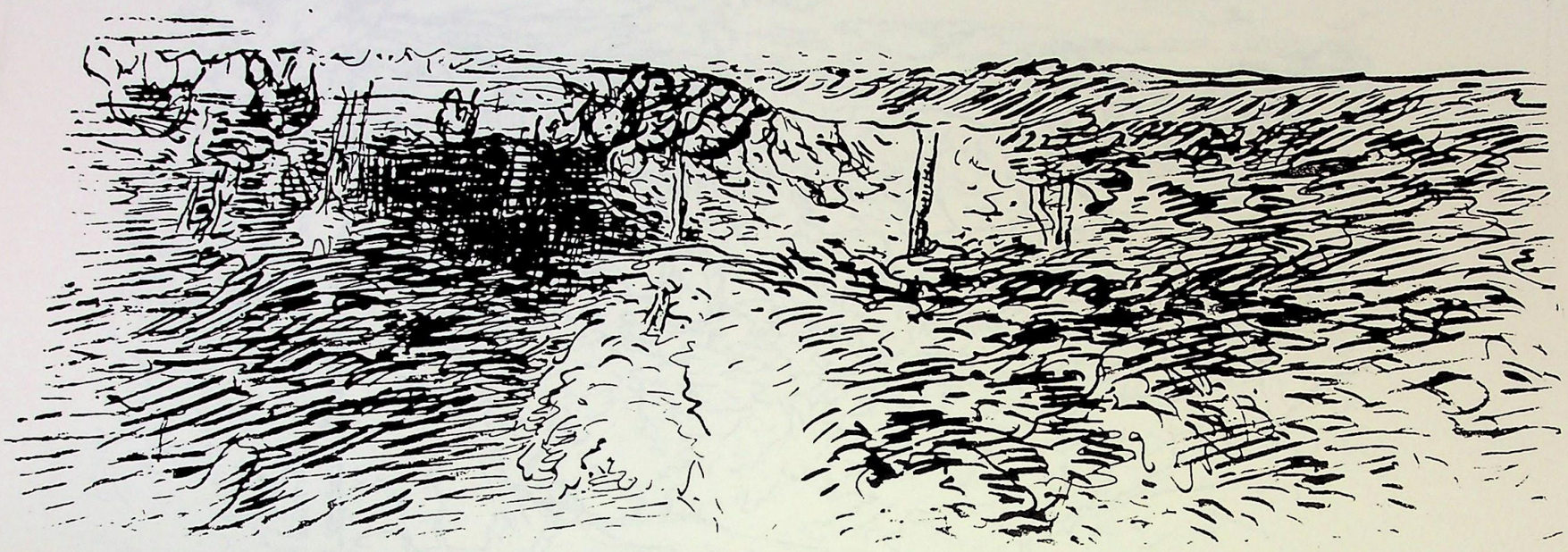
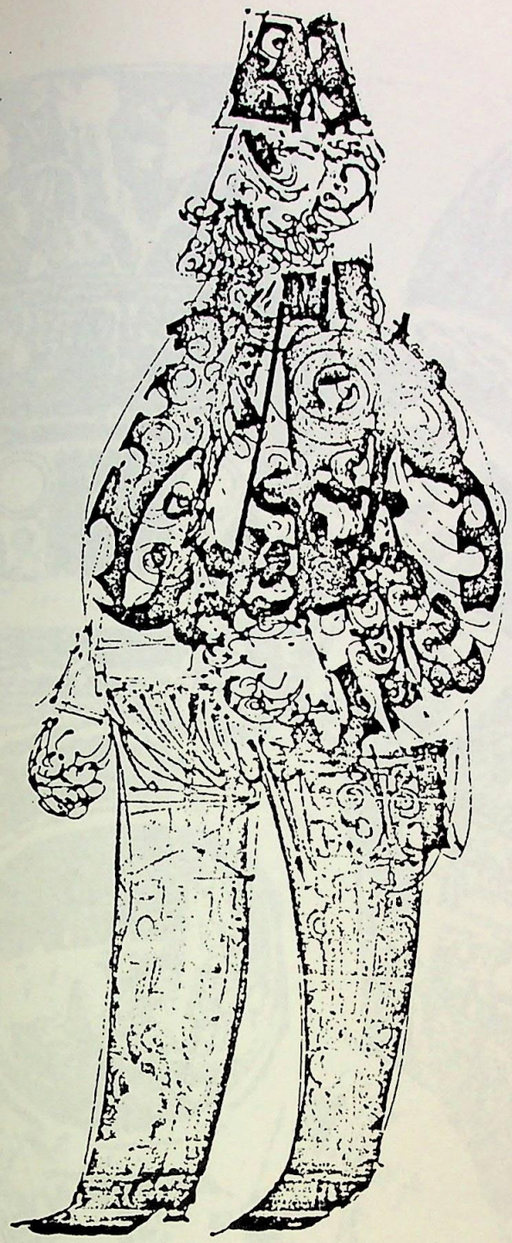


PLATE 48

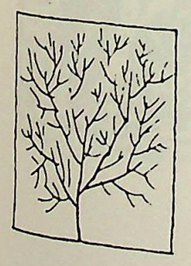
(106)

PLATE 49

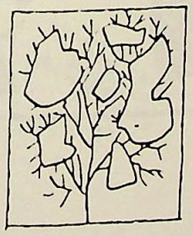


Misch Kohn
"Ornate Figure"
Chine collé and lift ground etching 34¼" x 17¾"
Weyhe Gallery

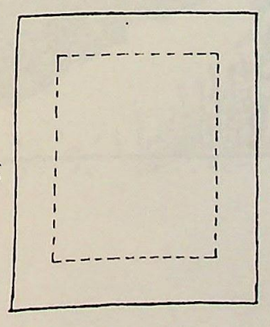
CHINE COLLÉ PROCESS



inked and wiped intaglio plate on press bed



colored paper in position on top of intaglio plate. Glue side up



Dampened rag paper over all

PLATE 50

147

'09

PLATE 51

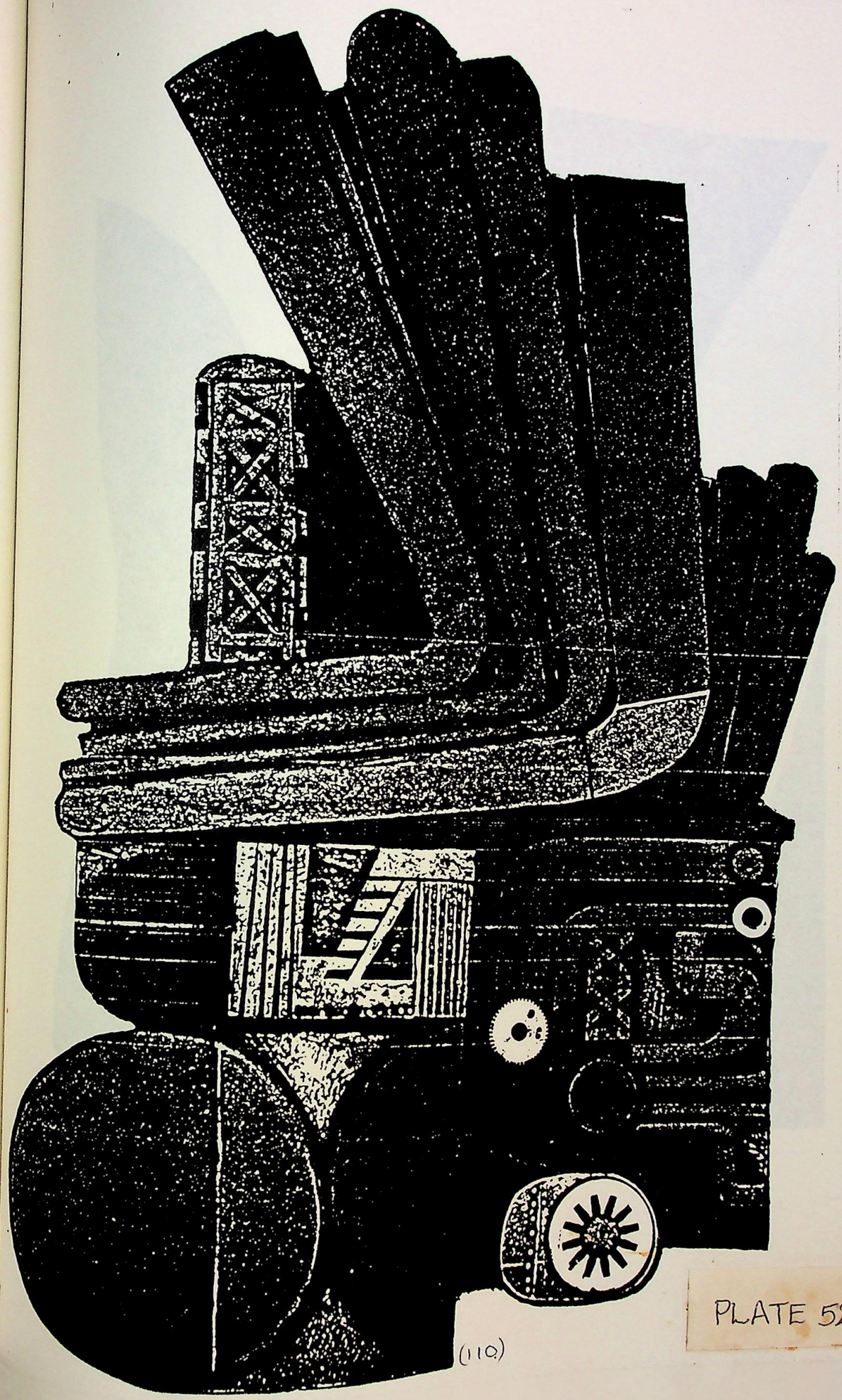


PLATE 52

PLATE 53

PLATE 54

PLATE 55

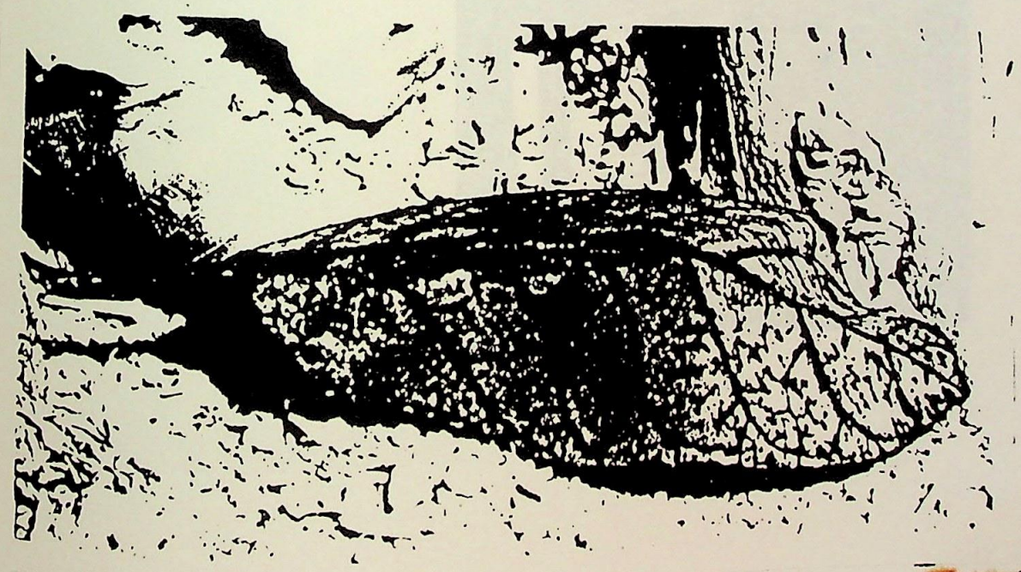


PLATE 56

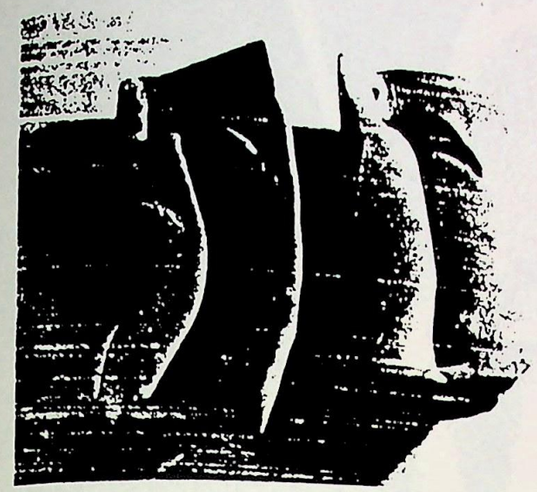


PLATE 57

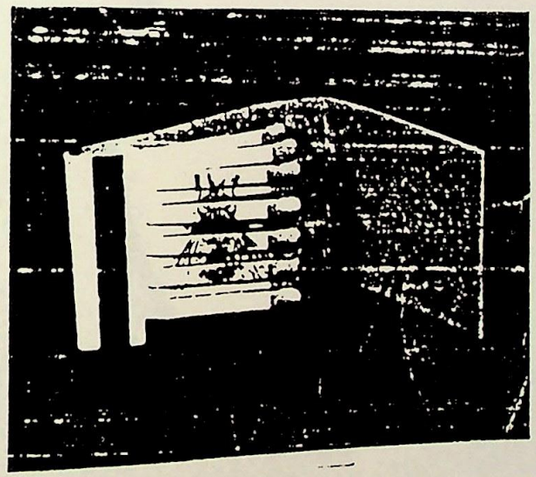


PLATE 58

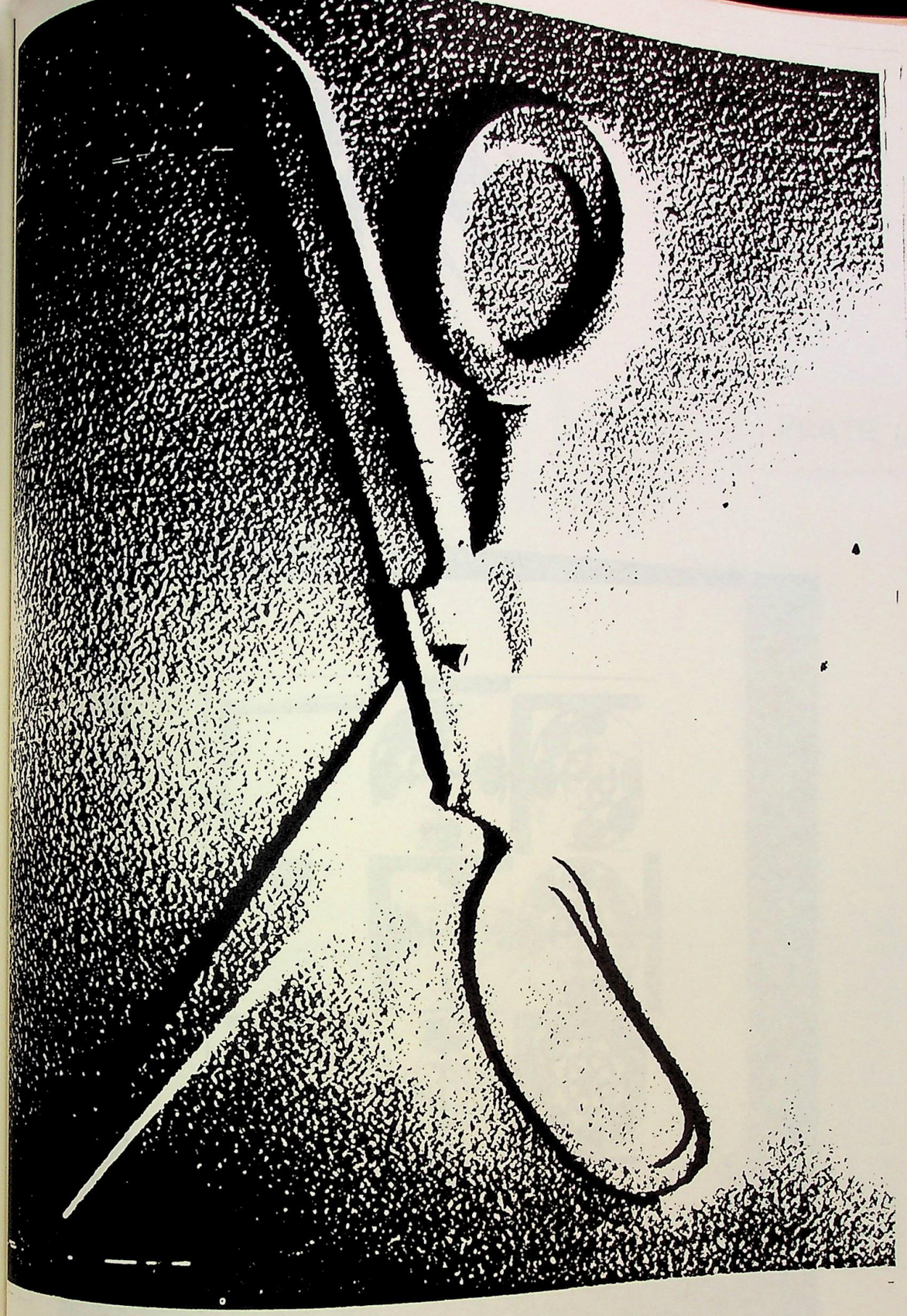


PLATE 59

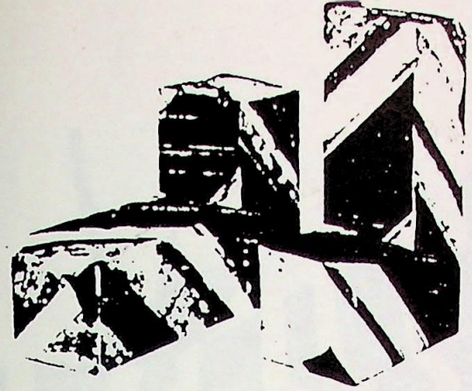


PLATE 60

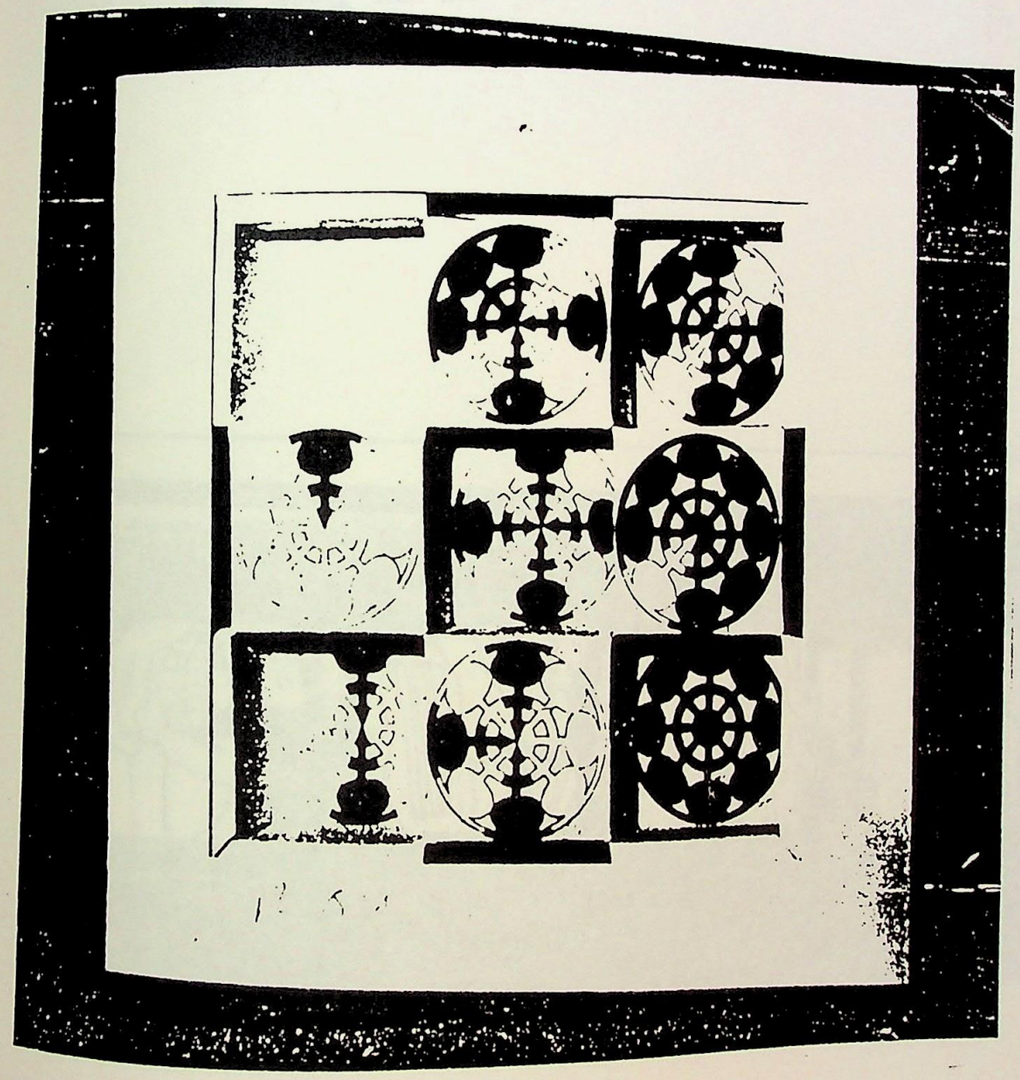


PLATE 61

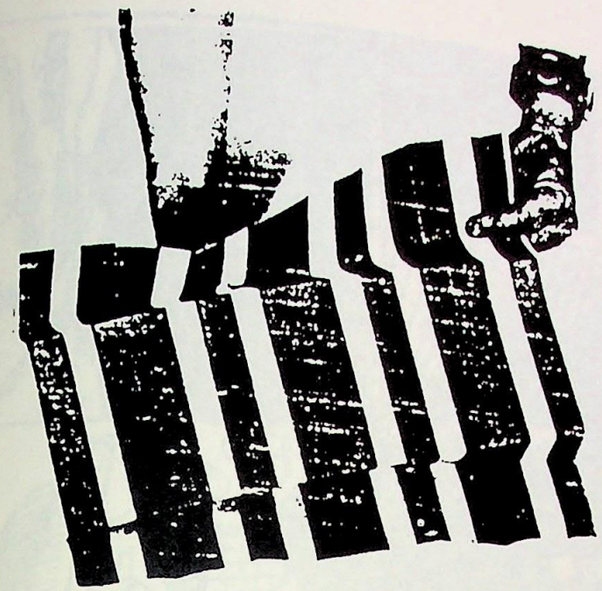


PLATE 62

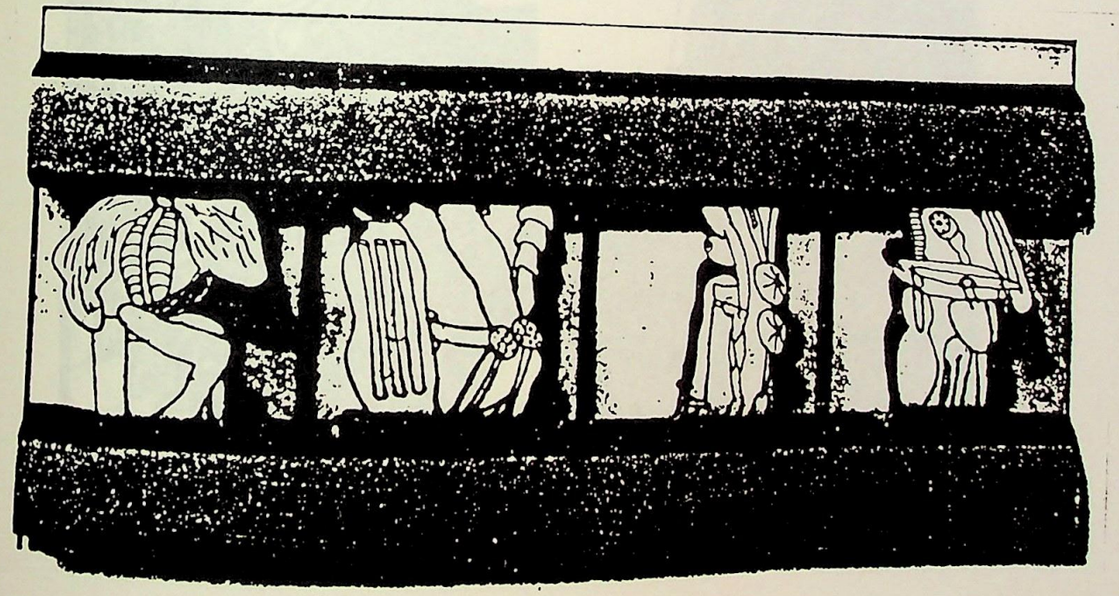


PLATE 63

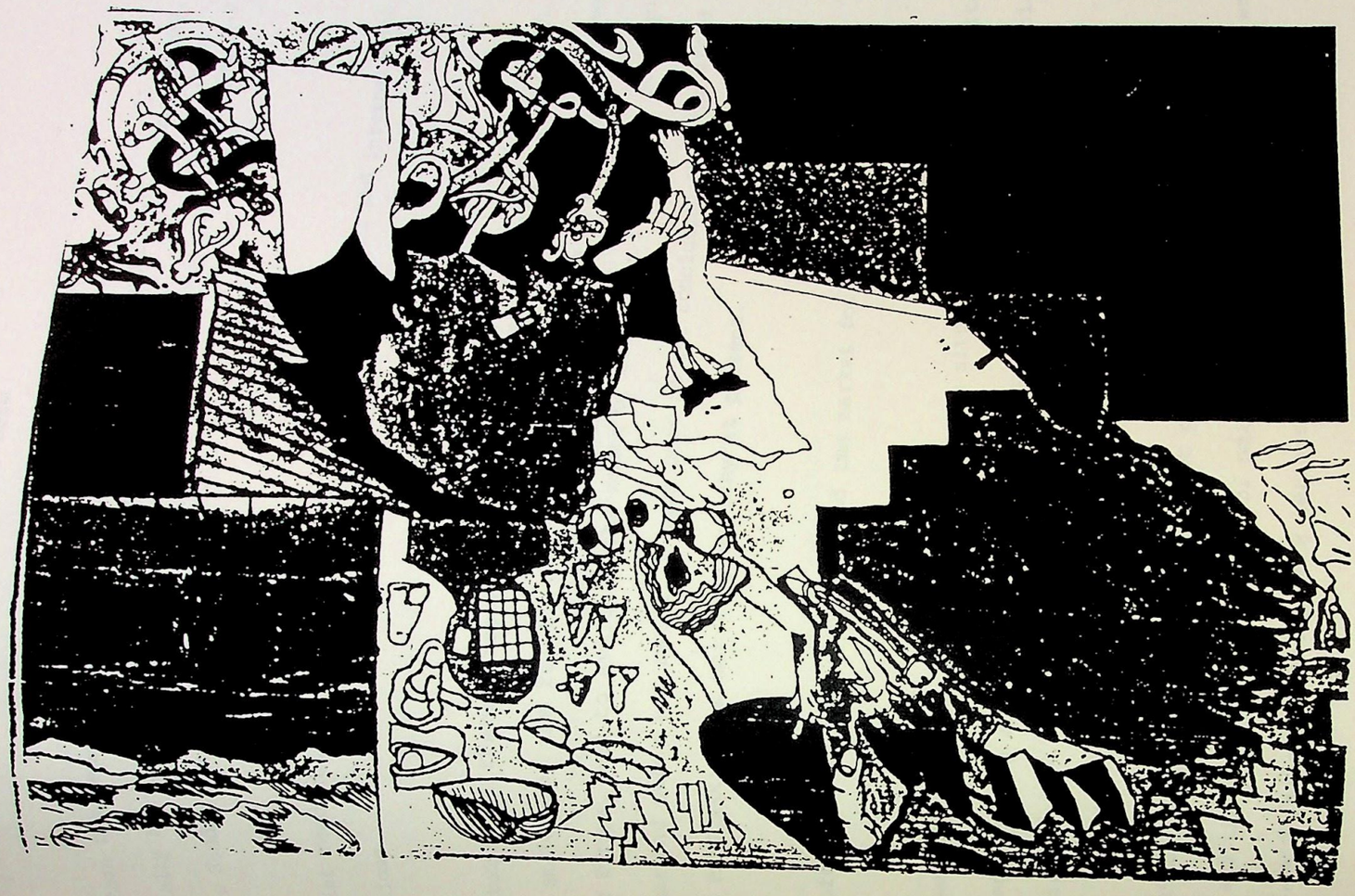


PLATE 64

Conclusion

Etching - its current status as an Art form

Less than two decades ago, we were witness to a 'Revolution' in printmaking, especially brought about by the opening of professional print workshops, e.g. The Graphic Studio, Dublin.

The print revolution resulted in local, regional, national and international exhibitions.

After studying different reports on the more recent exhibitions in an effort to develop an idea of the relative condition of printmaking in Ireland and in various parts of Europe, and to evaluate the state of etching in relation to other print techniques and other art media, I have come to the conclusion that the state of European Printmaking is not very healthy at present.

Museums offer little encouragement and the market for prints is depressed.

Artists seem to be responding to this negative situation by turning their attention to painting, drawing and multi-media works on paper, which are more acceptable to the public.

It seems that the modern art establishment prefers ballroom-sized paintings, sculpture and the in-between category of painted objects, that leap off the wall into space, and fails to take prints seriously.

An annoying aspect of many print biennials is the murkiness of the selection process, with elaborate layers of selection elimination, invitation, rejection and awards.

The consulting curator for the World Print Council, Leslie Lubbers, after visiting several International Print Exhibitions[1], came to the conclusion that the major support for prints in Europe was precisely the print biennials and triennials. In this case, the challenge is to make these so good that they move away from the fringes and closer to the centres of European Contemporary Art.

I reluctantly have to agree. I feel the goal should be to encourage increasing interest on the part of the other players in the game - the museums, galleries and critics.

Far from abandoning prints, exhibitions curated to emphasize the role of prints in relation to other media or history, will be the best vehicle for drawing prints into the mainstream.

From viewing the work in overall exhibitions, there are fewer prints than works in other media - Painting 40%, Sculpture 30% and in descending order Drawing, Mixed Media, Prints, Photography and Ceramics.

1 The Norwegion International Print Biennale,

The fifth International Graphic Biennale in Poland,

The sixth European Biennale in France,

The Based Art Fair,

The Venice Biennale,

Graphica Creativa International,

Triennial exhibition in Finland,

The Triennial of European Etching in Grado, and some Parisian museums.

The reason for this is that there are fewer printers. Artists tend to prefer painting and to a lesser extent, sculpture, for practical reasons, - due to the fact that access to a printing press is usually difficult under normal circumstances, for financial reasons and because many find that printmaking is technically too complex for them.

From viewing the sampling of prints, in the Print Exhibitions, it is obvious that there is no single approach to graphic expression that finds unanimity.

Printmakers are moving towards a more personal, less machine-controlled, simple technology to express their innermost ideas. By and large it appears that the majority of them are returning to their studios to pursue the intaglio process of Etching. Some are attracted by the wide range of materials and processes that the etcher can use and others, by the opportunity to make editions of multiple-originals. All respond to the special characteristics of line and colour that occur when an etching is transferred from plate to paper. Others (in smaller numbers) work at making images on screen and stone, while those desirous of an immediate result find the challenge of the monotype, agreeable.

The artist uses etching as a vehicle for self expression and when the limitations of the craft fail to bring the artist to his destination, the craft must be modified, combined with other craft forms, or abandoned.

The future usefulness of etching demands that it remain flexible, viable, experimental, and forward-looking, in order to meet the needs of contemporary artists in a technically - innovative and artistically - complex society. The question for etching is not whether it can survive as an ancient and venerable craft of great historical and artistic interest, but whether it can be put to the service of the

artist-etcher as a means of self expression that can meet the needs of contemporary imagery and contemporary attitudes toward media.

The non-traditional etcher searches for technical freedom by exploring new processes and combining etching with the non-printmaking media of painting and sculpture. Painters, sculptors and printmakers will use etching techniques as a support for the resolution of problems in their special arts.

The future of etching lies in its service to artists. To achieve this end, etching must be open and responsive, both technically and artistically, so that the artist can find in it an opportunity for experimentation and individuality.

Contemporary etching will be used by artists who do not feel fearful and protective about the long tradition of the etching craft, and instead use it to meet special needs of self expression. Some people feel that the health and vitality of etching as a craft lies in its ability to attract artists working in the mainstream of their time and that etching must become an "inter-media", interacting with painting and sculpture. The artist must turn to etching as an expression of powers of creation and expression. Etching, painting and sculpture must be closely linked.

Certainly it is exciting and encouraging that the experience and wisdom of men and women from all parts of Europe will be utilized to influence, inspire and shape innovative programmes, designed to draw a new generation of artists and critics into the world of European printmaking.

2 Sixth British International Print Biennale, 1979

Held in the Cartwright Hall, Bradford

Represented 30 nations -

50% Intaglio

20% Screenprints and in descending order

Lithographs

Mixed media

Relief prints

2 American Prints, 1879-1978

An Exhibition held at the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum 1980

Exhibited the work of 48 artists -

87 Etchings

30 Lithographs

16 Drypoints

8 Screenprints

3 Wood engravings

3 Printed Art - A view of two decades. An Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1980

Exhibited the work of 88 artists from 17 countries -

36 Etchings

34 Silkscreens

17 Lithographs

3 Woodcuts

1 Mezzotint

1 Linoprint

4 (A) Listowel National Graphic Exhibition, 1984

An Exhibition in Listowel, Co. Kerry.

Exhibited the work of 63 artists -

50 Etchings

14 Screenprints

12 Lithographs

2 Woodcuts

2 Mezzotints

1 Linoprint

1 Engraving

4 (B) Listowel Fourth International Print Biennale, 1985.

An Exhibition in Listowel, Limerick, Cork and Galway

Exhibited the work of 83 artists from 30 different countries -

59 Etchings

20 Screenprints

15 Lithographs

5 Mezzotints

3 Woodcuts

3 Linoprints

5 (A) Living Art Exhibition, 1982 -

27 Photographs

26 Drawings

13 Screenprints

7 Lithographs

5 Etchings

3 Paintings

1 Mixed media

5 (B) Living Art Exhibition, 1984

An Exhibition in The Douglas Hyde Gallery, The Project Arts Centre and various other centres.

Exhibited the work of 13 artists -

9 Paintings

9 Mixed Media

3 Etching

2 Lithographs

1 Drawing

6 (A) GPA, 1982

Exhibition for emerging artists

Exhibited work of 24 artists -

19 Paintings

9 Sculptures

8 Drawings

7 Mixed Media

4 Ceramics

2 Stained Glass

2 Photographs

1 Screenprint

1 Video/cassette

6 (B) GPA, 1983

Exhibited work of 15 artists -

11 Paintings

5 Mixed Media

3 Drawings

2 Sculptures

2 Photographs

7 (A) Eva Exhibition, 1983

Limerick Exhibition of Visual Art

Exhibition held in Limerick -

26 Sculptures

25 Paintings

24 Mixed Media

21 Drawings

6 Screenprints

6 Etchings

2 Photographs

7 (B) Eva Exhibition, 1984

Exhibition held in Municipal Art Gallery, Pery Square, Limerick

Exhibited work of 55 artists -

19 Paintings

13 Mixed

9 Drawings

5 Etchings

2 Sculptures

2 Monoprints

8 Exposure 3 Exhibition, 1983

Exhibition in Ilac Centre, Dublin

Exhibited work of 355 artists -

128 Paintings

72 Drawings

46 Mixed Media

32 Sculptures

27 Photographs

10 Etchings

9 Screenprints

4 Ceramics

2 Monoprints

2 Woodcuts

1 Lithograph

9 Graphic Studio Touring Exhibition

Exhibited work of 25 artists -

19 Etchings

11 Lithographs

3 Woodcuts

2 Mezzotints

10 (A) Independent Artists 1984

Exhibition held in the Bank of Ireland, Exhibition Hall, Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2. Exhibited work of 70 artists -

45 Paintings

10 Drawings

9 Mixed Media

8 Sculptures

5 Photographs

Contd/.

3 Etchings

2 Woodcuts

1 Ceramic

1 Screenprint

1 Lithograph

1 Monoprint

10 (B) Independent Artists, 1985

Exhibition held in Dublin and Belfast

82 Paintings

21 Sculptures

15 Mixed Media

12 Photographs

11 Drawings

5 Screenprints

5 Etchings

2 Linoprints

1 Monoprint

1 Mezzotint

11 Rosc 1984 -

72 Paintings

37 Sculptures

18 Mixed media

1 Fabric

12 Cork Art Now Exhibition 1985

Exhibited work of 95 artists -

65 Sculptures

49 Paintings

19 Drawings

16 Stained Glass

12 Mixed Media

11 Etchings

7 Performance Installations

7 Ceramic Wallpieces

7 Banners

4 Lithographs

3 Tapestries

2 Screenprints

1 Woodcut

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