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An historical perspective on print  
as a mirror of social change with a view  
to it's position in the hierarchy of fine  
art media.



ANDY WARHOL (1966) BANANA.  
[SILK SCREEN]

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## -CHAPTER 1.

Print making as a craft and art has existed for several hundred years. Fine art printing at the moment consists of three main media , etching lithography and silk screen. The first etching recorded is that by U<del>rs</del> Graf in 1513. However, print was to wait till the seventeenth century for it's Hey day. The first lithography was to be pulled in 1798 more by good fortune than anything else, when someone found that by applying an oily crayon to a lith stone from Austria, one could quite simply reproduce the mark by wetting the stone.

Silk screen on the other hand has only quite recently come into vogue, that is from the 1930's, and other Print forms in use for centuries include wood cuts and line cuts. The issue in question here, however, is the position of print within the Fine Art sphere, when compared to painting.

Print is considered by many, whether Gallery owners, Gallery - going public or others as a secondary form compared to painting. This unfortunate state of affairs has many possible origins. Many lie in the history of print down through the ages, and the course, print and Printers have taken, through the last hundred years.

It is important at this stage to note also that many brilliant painters were also brilliant print makers. Such names as Degas, Rembrandt, and Picasso instantly spring to mind, to mention but a few. \* Examining the attitudes of these artists towards print should illuminate more clearly the seperateness or even conflict between the two media.

A lack of fundamental understanding of the nature of print in the twentieth century has also contributed to many of the misconceptions which exist regarding printmaking., for example.- that a print may be one of a vast series, of very little intrinsic value, and therefore notworth buying. This idea has been reinforced by the fact that many of the great painters of the world seem to have used printmaking as a private pleasure, rather than a public and saleable manifestation of their art.

Another force militating against a public appreciation of print, must be the manner in which Artists have tended to exhibit their prints in large group shows, this could be a result of the Gallery owners fear of putting all his or her' eggs in one basket. A chance . a gallery might be quite prepared to take with a little known painter.

A widely held misunderstanding also exists in the mind of the general public as to what a print actually is. It may seem to be a small grey smudgy scratchy image comparing very poorly with the luxurious glossy and brilliantly coloured representations of the *Mona Lisa*, that appear on the calendar which the office so liberally disperses at Christmas time. The sneaking feeling may exist that the <sup>mini</sup> print that one pays seventy five pounds for, has a couple of hundred identical brothers in the backroom and probably another hundred at home in the artist's studio, the backs of which are being used as shopping lists.

In the eyes of many, however, this idea, that is, of a printer producing many editions seems very much in keeping with an age of mechanical re-production.

In Walter Benjamin's 'The work of art in the age of mechanical re-production', he argues;

"The technique of re-production detaches the re-produced object from the domain of tradition." \* (1)

By making re-productions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence, and in permitting the re-production to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation it reactivates the object re-produced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition.

Benjamin continues to state that these two processes are both intertwined with modern mass movements and media. A good example is film.

"It's social significance particularly in its most positive form is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is the liquidation of the traditional value of cultural heritage." \* (2)

Print, one could therefore suggest, is to its audience as revolutionary as film, but to a lesser extent, in that it also re-produces the object of pictorial re-productions several times over, and allows the viewer to experience the object in his own environment. It is interesting to note that, whatever about today, print was at one stage perhaps the most up-to-date art form, in terms of keeping up with world trends at the time.

In the early eighteenth century lithography had, after some years, become perfected as the most immediate and automatic means of re-production available. Lithography enabled graphic art, (poster artists) and artists to keep pace with and illustrate events of every day. Art had achieved a process of immediate re-production.

However, print's debut, was to be short lived, with the invention of photography. In the words of Ruth Weisberg.

"For the first time in the process of re-production photography freed the hand of the most important artistic functions, which henceforth devolved only upon the eye looking into a lens, and since this perceives more swiftly than the hand can draw, the process of pictorial re-production was accelerated, so enormously that it could keep pace with speech\*." (3)

Here one could argue, lies the demise, or beginning of the demise of <sup>the print</sup> process, in after being out done by photography, lithography was relegated to the tacky medium of posters and announcement pamphlets for cabaret acts, peep-shows and other such amusements. After such a humiliating blow, one could only expect people's perception of lithography and print to go down in estimation accordingly.

It is important to note that down through the ages many artist's have used print making, not only as a way of producing rough sketches, but also simply as means of entertaining themselves, considering painting to be their more important medium. The renowned impressionist artist Edgar Degas, is a prime example of this. Though originally Degas saw print as a unique object, even one that should not be mass produced, when beginning to receive acclaim for his work, he chose temporarily to abandon it in favour of concentrating on his painting.

This man would argue, is not necessarily a bad thing. However, by 1870 the artist had become quite self assured and much more competent. His painting was selling quite well. With such events Degas resumed printing viewing the process as not only a means of re-producing the image but also as a type of experimental activity.

By 1875, Degas not only felt print and print's to be fine art objects, but also felt it imperative to master the means of industrial print, a process he steadfastly believed would help to popularise the print media.

At this time Degas launched plans to create and produce an illustrated periodical, released each month, consisting of the latest print work of various artist's. Though ultimately abandoned, these plans show the manner in which this individual artist's concept and ideas on print completely changed within a matter of years, from the notion <sup>of</sup> print being a fine art medium, creating a unique image to that of print as a mass produced serial.



This considerable turn around and change of view by the artist emphasises, the shifting sands on which the medium of print lies, while also indicating it's flexibility and democratic nature.

In 1961 Fritz Koenigberg, who would work as print-maker for the next 20 years, was appointed as assistant to the director of the print workshop at the Royal College of Art. He was a young man, only 25 years old, and his appointment was a significant one.

During his time at the Royal College of Art, Koenigberg was involved in a number of projects, including the design and production of a series of posters for the Royal College of Art. He was also involved in the design and production of a series of books for the Royal College of Art. His work at the Royal College of Art was a significant part of his career, and it was during this time that he developed his interest in print-making.

After leaving the Royal College of Art, Koenigberg continued to work as a print-maker, and he was involved in a number of projects, including the design and production of a series of posters for the Royal College of Art. He was also involved in the design and production of a series of books for the Royal College of Art. His work at the Royal College of Art was a significant part of his career, and it was during this time that he developed his interest in print-making.

\* These were the first and last years of his career as a print-maker, and he was involved in a number of projects, including the design and production of a series of posters for the Royal College of Art. He was also involved in the design and production of a series of books for the Royal College of Art. His work at the Royal College of Art was a significant part of his career, and it was during this time that he developed his interest in print-making.

The first year of his career as a print-maker was a significant one, and it was during this time that he developed his interest in print-making. He was involved in a number of projects, including the design and production of a series of posters for the Royal College of Art. He was also involved in the design and production of a series of books for the Royal College of Art. His work at the Royal College of Art was a significant part of his career, and it was during this time that he developed his interest in print-making.



"Prints have changed the course of history. They have worked for peace or for war, for God or for the Devil. Tyrants and political bosses have feared their power. Print have pleaded the cause of re-formation against the popes, of the republic against the monarchy. They have championed student rebellions and peasant uprisings. They have fought slavery and corruption as they now fight war and pollution. The history of man's aspirations can be revealed by leafing through a great print collection." \* (4)

So says Fritz Eichenberg who would seem at first glance to have one believe that print is singularly responsible for chronicling every major happening, of the human race, since it's very conception .

History however would suggest that a print although not a major catalyst for change, did succeed in depicting some changes or movements, in that at first it showed in a pictorial form, images that could be mass produced that showed a wide audience a subjective view of history. At first print operated as a mechanism for backing up the tradition of church and state.

With <sup>the</sup> arrival of the printing press unimaginably exciting prospects opened up. Instead of elaborately illustrated manuscripts, painstakingly produced by hand, destined for the libraries of a tiny privileged minority of popes and princes. There suddenly burst on the world scene the single greatest tool for the education and enlightenment of the ordinary man, the printed book, complete with unforgettable graphic images in the form of illustrations. It was at this point that artists began to emerge from the shadows of anonymity and come into the light. Among these one man stood head and shoulders above his peers, this man was Albrecht Durer. Born in Nuremberg in 1471. He was early exposed to the unprecedented developments in publishing and printing that were generated by the first presses of southern Germany.

\* These were restless and disturbing times Martin Luther had mounted his challenge to the pope on the church door at Wittenberg and had been excommunicated. The peasants had taken up arms against intolerable oppression and most aristocrats around Durer had been drawn into the battle\*. (5)

He like everyone else in his age was deeply religious and his famous works, for example his apocalyptic series from 1498, fifteen large prints complete with German and Latin texts, his "Great Passion" series twelve large woodcuts of 1511, the "Small Passion", thirty seven small woodcuts with Latin texts and the twenty prints on the life of the VIRGIN MARY all enjoyed enormous success as much because of his undoubted genius and mastery of his medium, as for their themes, which engaged the minds and hearts of virtually everyone in Europe.

Apart from these works he produced a staggering number of other paintings, drawings and single prints, while, working on his other series.

\* Durer's restless mind drove him to more scholarly pursuits. Obsessed with the idea of passing his knowledge on to future generations, he published in 1525 "Underweisung der Messung", practical geometry and instruction in perspective, both human and architectural; in 1527 "Ethische Unterricht Zur Befestigung der Stadt, Schloss Und Flecke", a manual on fortification. Four volumes on "Menschlicher Proportion" (Human Proportion) followed and were published a year after his death in 1528\*. (6)

While his work has never been surpassed a few great names, must forever be associated with the precise, demanding and unique art of print making. Among this elite is wonderful Rembrandt. It can truly be said that Rembrandt changed the course of art history. He experimented with the technical and formal possibilities of etching, when it's development was still at a tender age. The soft blurry aspect of his work contrasts strongly with the precise line and flatness of Durer's wood cuts.

Rembrandt for his part personally developed a less "austere" form of etching. (see printing techniques). Instead of drawing directly on to a hard waxed plate, Rembrandt favoured the use of a "soft" wax, which when applied to the plate, could be covered with paper for ease of drawing on. This gave the possibility of a soft and fluid outline, previously made difficult by drawing directly on the plate.

The Dutch Master's Print work, contained many painterly qualities which became apparent with his liberal use of marks and strokes, and "black mass" to create form and three dimensional effect. By combining this soft and unexpected effect with the more linear type of dry point engraving, <sup>he</sup> gave hitherto unattempted richness, variety and heightened artistic expression of his work.

The political and social environment in 1600's, Holland was quite different from that of Durer's Germany. This did not work to Rembrandt's advantage. He was an artist of historical and biblical subjects in a time and place where these themes were not in vogue.

\* The ordinary art buyer in the united provinces (Holland as it was then known), paid little heed to art theory; he preferred subjects from daily life, that were familiar to him, and so gave his trade to artist's in "minor specialties". (7)

Rembrandt's genius was recognised but that did not prevent him from being constantly on the edge of financial disaster and ending his days in bankrupt poverty. Time however has vindicated his stature as an artist. In his prints especially his large and magnificent biblical series it can be said that,



\* He things in nature that everyone had missed before him and gave others the eyes to see them with\*. (8)

Possibly the most timeless and moving of Rembrandt's prints are the series of self portraits in which every possible mark of needle on metal is explored with minute fascination, while the face, almost causally looks out at the viewer through the years saying more than whole volumes could ever do. To quote Frances Bacon,;

\* If you take the great self portraits you will find that the whole contour of the face changes time after time, it's a totally different face, although it has what is called a look of Rembrandt, and by this difference it involves you in different areas of feeling\*. (9)

Vincent Van Gogh put it quite superbly when he wrote;

\* He paints a self-portrait, old, toothless, wrinkled, wearing a cotton cap, a picture from life in a mirror. He is dreaming, dreaming and his brush resumes his self-portrait, but only the head whose expressions becomes tragically sad, more tragically saddening\*. (10)

Here is an artist using the print not as a "product" for sale or prestige, but as a private and personal statement, an expression of his inner voice and we are privileged to have this intensely intimate and unique series of prints in existence today.

A third great master of print was Giovanni Battista Piranesi - a ventian (1720 to 1778) who lived out his career in Rome, a suitable location given his fascination with architecture and archeology. He produced twenty seven volumes on the antiquities of Rome and also a profusion of plates. Such was his work load that he eventually employed a large staff of assistants, who included his own sons, and daughter Laura. Probably his most important and most enduring work were two editions of Carceri (Prisons) an amazing series which explored a dark and fearsome world of imaginary places of torture and confinement. These strikingly sinister studies which gave full play to his love of architectural detail, include baffling and nightmarish elements. Staircases which coil dizzyingly up or downwards only to end suspended over an abyss, doorways and archways leading to nothing, bizarre and terrifying instruments which suggest unspeakable horrors of torture and suffering and induce a breathless and claustrophobic feeling of wanting to escape and breath fresh air in the viewer.

With the passing of years, the macabre fascination of these superbly produced prints has not lessened, and many moderns have been influenced and inspired by Piranesi and it is possible to see his shadow falling across the work of graphic artist's of the twentieth century to a marked extent, seeming to indicate a shared experience of the heart-of-darkness fear and confusion at the centre of apparant monumental organisation and order.



Past artists including poets and writers like Kafka, Melville, Coleridge and Poe have been fascinated by Piranesi's work and several ideas have been put forward as clues to understanding it. One is that rather than fearsome and terrifying scenes to be haunted by, the scenes are more in the nature of stage sets on a giant scale. <sup>are</sup>Seemingly harmless and innocuous elements, for example, the colonnade of St. Peters as the background to some prints. Instruments which at first seem designed to break men's bodies, are rather the mooring tackle of venetian quaysides, "Writ large", and the grills of terrible dungeons being in fact the grids appearing on all Roman dwellings and which any contemporary Roman would have recognised as such, viewing the drawing in a light-hearted way as being theatrical and exaggerated rather than goulish and menacing.

Another theory so ably expressed by Jonathan Scott is

\* That Piranesi was recording visions which he had seen under the influence of opium. Laudanum; an opium based medicine, was regarded as a standard panacea throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and as such, might well have been administered to the young artist during the dangerous fever of his first Roman visit. De Quincey was immediately able to recognise the labyrinthine structures of his own opium induced dreams, from Coleridge's description of Piranesi's plates. Many features from the Carri recur in the accounts which opium takers have given of their hallucinations, the huge subterranean chambers wreathed in smoke, spiral staircases that lead nowhere drawbridges opening onto an abyss, vast walls and towers that reduce the dreamer to puny insignificance. In opium reveries the memory selects familiar objects and transforms them into vast and frightening complexities\*. (11)

We must be careful, however, about uncritically accepting any such theory.

"Jonathan Scott then goes on to state;

\* If he was addicted to the drug in his youth, none of the contemporary sources mention it, and he must have broken the habit or succeeded in gaining complete control of it, because his enormous artistic output, to say nothing of his archaeological and polemical work seems beyond the capacity of an enervated opium addict\*. (12)

In the final analysis however, whatever the speculation as to the sources of inspiration used by him, it was a combination of Piranesi's feverish imagination and his own saturnine genius and his abiding fascination for structural design that made his work unforgettable. His ease in handling his chosen medium and the apparently unyielding materials of the printmaker to convey the effects of darkening shadows, the interplay of light penetrating from above and of arcades receding into the limitless gloom, continue to impress, and in their dark and fantastical images form an elaborate end-piece to an era.

A way of thinking , a way of life, a love of allegor y, metaphor parables and fantastical imagery that had typified the artistic vision since the beginning of the renaissance was coming to it's end. In its place would come a new and aggressive reality - a change in the social order, the rise of the common man in a series of bloody and traumatic revolutions, an age of so called reason, followed by the fresh subjugation of the industrial revolution. All of this would be mirrored faithfully by the man with the engraver's needle and the story of print would be as always a faithful chronicle of these changes.

In at the beginning was Goya, a genius great enough to be witness and reporter of the now and violent winds of change that were about to engulf all of EUROPE. A spaniard, and a rebel all his life he had experienced living in Spain through it's peaks and troughs from passionate youth to disillusioned old man and his work faithfully reveals all of this.

In the deep and velvety blacks of the aquatint, Goya found a perfect way of expressing the drama and turmoil that life was to him. ( up to this point aquatint had been used solely for commercial use only).

In 1797 he produced the Capricios, a set of 80 aquatints which were an exposé of the hypocrisy, violence, brutality and intrigue that so riddled Spain's church and state in his own time.

A decade later the Napoleonic armies invaded Spain and were to give Goya the material for the terrifying and haunting anti-war scenes that formed a series of 82 aquatints he later produced, entitled "Los Desastres 'De la Guerra". Many of these prints were not to be published till some thirty five years after <sup>his</sup> death but their immediacy, vitality, the sense of looking into the very eyes of the terror stricken victims, of the bestial terrorists, the sense of seeing the nobility of the human degraded and traumatised by the savage and perverted loyalties of war forever retain their freshness and their ability to shock and sadden.

Goya also made an eighteen print series of " Proverbios" which were not to be published till a quarter of a century after his death, perhaps a safety measure, as they revealed his contempt and disillusion for virtually all aspects of society. In Goya's last days he turned his attention to lithography but his plates which remain to this day have been so tampered with as to make useful study impossible. His skillful experimentation with techniques of every sort are therefore something of a mystery still, perhaps a suitable state of affairs for one who was a;

\* last colossus among the great etchers and a continuing enigma to his many admirers\*. (13)

Intriguingly 'The Giant' was the title of Goya's last etched plate.

\* The plate was large and it cracked after only three impressions were printed. The technique is aquatint handled by a master. The great figure sits on the edge of the world as the night comes on. The silver moon is up and most things are in shadow, but the dying sun casts light upon the shoulders and parts of the face of the Giant, he looks up, still interested in what may be seen and in what it may mean. Perhaps the plate was Goya's last self portrait.\* (14)



## ROYALIST FRANCE

In pre-revolutionary France, the Arts flourished if mainly for the rich and pampered circle humming about the court and endlessly persuing a life of idle frivolity and pleasure as they followed the king from one royal residence to another, depending on the hunting season. A fashion for print "**portraits**" of the social luminaries created a market admirably filled by the excellent engraver Robert Nautéul (1623 - 1678).

The famous and sinister **Cardinal Mazarin** began to collect prints and eventually became the possessor of a collection <sup>of</sup> more than 120,000 fine works which became the foundation stone of the worlds most famous print depository the **Bibliothèque National**.

In France at this time the actual processes involved in print making underwent exciting changes and developments. While **Rembrandt's** influence was clearly felt new methods of production were tried.

The **Belgian Demarteau** method ( roulette technique) was used in **Boucher's** drawings successfully introducing pastel colours. His portrait of **Louis XV** used a separate plate for each colour. The 'stipple' technique and the crayon type work were each used to imitate drawing styles. Water colours were accurately re-produced by aquatint.

Prints were sought after and avidly collected by the court followers, and prints by **Antonie Watteau** ( 1684 - 1721). for instance were snatched up by the very people they illustrated, the 'Beautiful People' of that day.

Illustrated books were all the rage, and **François Boucher**, that master of the well-rounded nymph so adored by all, employed many engravers to keep up the supply, so great was the demand. Among prodigious amounts of work, he produced the illustrated works of **Moliere**.

**Madame de Pompadour**, patron of all things beautiful and whose personal collection of "**objets d'art, curiostite et vertu**", was so enormous whole buildings were designed to house it, set the fashion for buying collections of prints and engravings, and helped to make fashionable the works of **Boucher**, **Cochin**, and **Fragonard** and turn print making into big business, which happy state for the artist was to receive a tremendous blow with the French revolution, and in time, a dramatic change of theme, with harsh reality imposing it's mark in the world of art, as in all other.

## THE FRENCH SCENE

Famous artists in France had always produced large number of prints after the manner of the master's from **Tiepolo** to **Boucher** popular with collectors but not in any great sense breaking new ground in print making. Images of painted and powdered" shepherds and shepardessess" A là **Marie Antoinette** losing their slippers, making daisy chains, stroking kittens, and flirting with one another were the stock in trade. The blood soaked curtain of the French Revolution swept such stuff off the stage forever, and what followed was a rather undignified scramble to keep in with the new government demands to produce work of a Revolutionary nature, glorfying the new '**Liberte**', **Fraternite** and **Egalite**. **Debu-court** and **Jacques Louis David** did produce some scenes which provide us with a glimpse of the upheaval then sweeping France.

In 1793 a law was passed obligating every French artist to deposit one copy of each print he makes in the archives of the '**Depot Legal** a law by which the **Bibliotheque National** still profits.

## BRITAIN

An altogether different spirit burned in the hearts of British engravers and print makers. Here well-known print makers such as Hogarth whose famous series of moral illustrations shows the wickedness of Drink and Debauchery, and intending to be a great lesson for all flourished. Works such as his "Harlots Progress" "Rakes Progress" etc. showing the awful results of idleness and vice became incredibly popular and many professional engravers helped him to produce his great output. His style was extremely detailed with, in the later work, a somewhat heavy effect. Among his achievements was the passing of an act of Parliament in 1753 protecting the artist-print makers from the activities of pirate-copyists.

Gainsborough (1727 -1788) V.R. Cozens (1752 -1799) and other Royal Academicians produced beautiful and tranquil scenes of English country life.

Turner (1776-1837) left some beautiful and tantalisingly few examples of his different but fresh and luminous style.

Scorching satire was much in vogue in Georgian England, in play houses, broadsheets and among artists and this became the scene for several gifted etchers.

Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) studied in Paris and brought his Parisian stylishness to bear in his lampooning of society, while also managing to have a thoroughly high old time in society himself. He worked on his own plates in aquatint and had them hand coloured under his own supervision.

James Gillray (1751 - 1815) was a more savage exponent of the satirical print and he attacked every sacred cow in sight, sometimes going beyond the bounds of acceptable taste - very much in tune with the bawdy Georgians of the day.

George Crinkshaw (1791- 1878), also worked in the same vein but more gently, and his work is well known down to to-day, with his unforgettable illustrations for the earliest editions of Charles Dickens enormously popular works.



**William Blake** ( 1757 - 1827) was an entirely different engraver, living in a world of his own, austere, spiritual, fantastic, teeming with dreams, visions and romantic mysticisms. He used a method of etching in relief, which was revealed to him, he claimed by his dead brother **Robert** in a dream. Using an acid resisting liquid on a copper plate, then etching it in relief, he was able to produce plates of both handwritten poetry and illustrations. His wife acted as his assistant. His songs of innocence ( 1789) songs of **Experience**, **The Marriage of Heaven and Hell** and **Jerusalem** are considered works of art of priceless value, though in his own time he was poor as a church mouse and had very few admirers, though **Samuel Palmer** ( 1805 - 1881) and **Edward Calvert** (1799 - 1883) were two who both admired **Blake** and were influenced by his spiritual approach to produce fine works of their own which have echoes of **Blake's** powerful personality about them..

Throughout the nineteenth century.

As the nineteenth century progressed in France print became the focus of interest to many prominent impressionists whose names are now legendary and whose paintings are the best known in the world. Their work in the field of print making is unknown to many but in 1862 the **Societe des Aquafortistes** was founded and attracted an elite of copperplate engravers including **Degas**, **Whistler** and **Pissarro**. Portfolios published by the society included work by **Corot**, **Manet** and **Delacroix**. However public interest was lagging and print collectors were few and far between.

\*It seems unbelievable that **Du Jour et de la Nuit** a publication started by **Degas**, including **Pissarro**, **Mary Cassatt**, and his own work folded up after only one issue.\* (15)

**Degas**, already mentioned in the introduction, was a master engraver from the beginning. He was a total perfectionist going over his plates many times improving painstakingly his effects by means of dry point aquatint and burnishing;

**Degas's** ethereal technique is uniquely his own and can hardly be traced to any outside influence though he studied **Rembrandt** and **Velasquez** intimately.

Many other important prominent impressionists like **Renoir**, **Rodin**, **Cezanne**, **Monet** and **Edward Monet** went as far as producing some fascinating and promising work in the field of print, but the lack of general and even critical interest sapped their enthusiasm for the medium and they ceased active involvement in it.

The elegant and timeless work of these artists however, showed little foreboding of the cataclysmic changes that were about to engulf almost every country in Europe.

\* War is the great subject of twentieth century printmaking for the same reason that landscape was the great subject for nineteenth century American painting: there's so much of it around.... (16)

\* A whole generation of German artists paid close attention to war for the most understandable of reasons. War paid attention to them. As in France painting held the central position in German Art, but both painters and the sculptors poured much energy into printmaking. One outstanding artist, Kathe Kollwitz, made prints her primary medium of expression although she was also a sculptress of great power \*. (17)

Kollwitz ( 1867 - 1945) saw her youngest son Peter killed in action during world war one and her grandson Peter killed in action in world war two. Their home in Berlin containing a vast collection of drawings and prints was destroyed by aerial bombardment in 1943. She made war the central subject of her work because she knew it so well.

\*Someone once noted wisely that the histories of wars are all writted by the victors. Kollwitz wrote a history of war from the point of view of the always vanquished confronted by the madness of her century, she twice compressed all that she wished to say, into a single cry " Seed corn must not be ground". The first time was in response to world war one's patriotic proposal for one final draft of school boys, as the western front was cracking. The second time was one war later as Americans in Italy found their prisoners to be twelve year old's in uniform. A week before her death she wrote in a letter." The war accompanies me to the end". (18)

#### -CHAPTER IV

The spectre of war, so intrinsically a part of the experience of the human family had, in the twentieth century assumed a stature and reality that went far beyond anything previously experienced by man. From the terrible beginning of the Great War in 1914, which took a toll of 10 million lives, one storm of civil unrest, followed hard on the heels of another, dramatic technical advances in arms and weaponry adding to the suffering and inevitable death toll of both fighting men and increasingly of civilians. Kathe Kollwitz's terrible cry for mercy "seed corn must not be ground" pleaded hopelessly for the lives of the younger and younger children who were being sacrificed to the insatiable God of War, but still it went on. Artists as always showed their revulsion at man's inhumanity by creating unforgettable images in every medium imaginable. Pablo Picasso, giant of modern art was no exception.

Since his earliest years ( his first word was reportedly the utterance "Pencil") his talent was prodigious and his confidence in his own vision was total.

He had an;

\* Extraordinary power to assimilate very varied influences and an uninhibited will to experiment in order to arrive at a more satisfactory mode of expression. Inspired on the one hand by primitive forms ( ancient Iberian sculpture and African masks and carving). and on the other by Cezanne's empirical reorganisation of his motifs, Picasso, achieved a major revolution. The epoch making painting 'demoiselles d'avignon'... was a vital step in freeing the artist from his traditional obligation to natural appearances. Cubism was evolved by Picasso and Braque through tempering the freedom with Cezanne's sense of structural discipline\*. (19)

His "Guernica" a protest against the bombing of the Basque town by Pro-Franco German bombers which combines a violent surrealist distortion with restrained subtlety of colour in a complex symbolic allegory remains the work most associated with him and retains its shocking power undimmed by time. Many of Picasso's mould-breaking work was in the language of print and a prime example of the is "The Dream and Lie of Franco", a series of linked panels depicting the massive cost of live, culture, and landscape caused by Franco's crusade for power in Spain. Picasso also used wood cut and aquatint to depict his non-political subjects (often intensely Spanish in inspiration) Guitars or bulls, and combined with fantastic and legendary images such as fauns, harlequins and minotaurs.

Though a prolific printer, Picasso is remembered mainly as a painter, and his influences on other artists of this century is unparalleled.

Ron Kitaj, Allen Jones, David Boshier, Peter Phillips are among those whose work owes a debt to him and among famous names in print David Hockney is a modern who has made no secret of the esteem in which he holds Picasso.

(Hockney)



After Picasso's death in April 1973, Hockney with a group of other artists was selected to produce a portfolio of prints as a memorial to the Great Spaniard. After this project Hockney went on to produce several notable prints showing his own great personal esteem for the master. The most striking and successful of these is "Artist and model." In this witty print (1873-47) Hockney and Picasso are shown seated, facing one another at a small table, gazing intently at each other as the artist and his model often do in the work of Picasso. Hockney is naked, thus humbly placing himself in the role of model and denoting his admiration of the dead artist. In his print Hockney uses an intriguing mixture of styles and techniques, including hard ground, soft ground, and sugar aquatint. His attitude to this is well illustrated in an interview with Pierre Restany in July 1974 when he said \* I would tend to think that a great twentieth century artist, such as Picasso would use that kind of freedom as regards form, going from one style to another, exactly as he wished. That implies a very extended scale and a very great one. I am not saying my work has such a range, far from it, but I believe in the freedom of action which derives from the liberties you take as regards form\*. (20)

For the latter half of the 20th century- Liberties would seem to be the operative word. With the proliferation of technological advances in the machine age, the arrival of cinema, television, & video, the pop culture arrived on the world scene, and nothing has been the same since. The established codes and traditional, received ideas of many centuries were all shown the door, and culture and civilisation was stood on its head.

In the ensuing era of prosperity and progress (in the western world, at any rate) the artist found himself reflecting a 'cool impersonal finished work with the hand-made look removed, no signs of brush stroke or engraving tool, a machine product in fact, of the mass-culture age he could be said to represent.

Many well-known artists turned to silk screen printing or serigraphy. Among them Roy Lichtenstein, Victor Vasarely, Jack Youngerman, Robert Rauschenberg and others.

New techniques for expanding the possibilities in screening were developed. Adhesive tapes and films, plastics, masking fluids and synthetic gauze allowed for half-tone and continuous tone images giving more freedom than before. Quick drying screens, allowing faster production drying time, and advanced motorized equipment brought the possibility of several thousand impressions per hour. Naturally, thus arose serious questions as regards the criteria of printmaking. As less and less of the finished work was actually performed by the artist the question was posed, how could such work be actually considered an original print?.

\* The silk screen thus brought into sharper focus some of the disputes over standards and definitions that had been troubling the print field for some time. The signature itself gave rise to more argument, formerly each print was supposed to be signed by the artist, but if the edition runs to thousands the handling of the signature presents serious physical problems. In such cases the artist has sometimes consented to have his name added by rubber stamp, a questionable practice which may throw the whole problem of the value of the artists signature and of the signed and numbered print into a cocked hat\*. (21)

Since print making started one of the beauties of the medium has always been it's afford-ability for the ordinary person. Nowadays however very large sums have been commanded by famous names ( such as Andy Warhol) for mass produced images of cans of Campbells Soups etc., a practice considered by many to devalue the whole concept of the "original print", and to bring <sup>print</sup> into the disrepute considered at the outset of this essay. Even in Ireland, where vast runs of a print would not be the norm, some well-known artists have signed and sold as limited editions, photographic re-productions of their work thus further confusing in the public mind, the ~~bounders~~ seperating the artifact from the re-production.

However, print has survived many revolutions and counter revolutions and continues to hold it's unique place in the family of the fine arts. It holds it's position, smaller, usually less colourful, often, cheaper, certainly than it's aristocratic sisters, painting and sculpture, but with it's cold eye capturing forever a side of the human story the world would be impoverished without.

In the words of Campbell Bruce. President of the International Association of Art Critics, ( Irish Section).

\* It is somewhat clichéd to talk of market forces but anyone following the prices paid at auction of prints or counting the number of major print exhibitions and bienniales taking place each year around the world will realise that print making is in the midst of a renaissance of considerable importance triggered no doubt by a great outburst of activity in print making that has taken place over the last ten to fifteen years, in no small part due to the desire of artists to reach a wider public and at prices they can afford.\* (22)

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

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ALBRECHT DURER (1497-98) THE MARTYRDOM OF TEN THOUSAND.  
[WOODCUT]



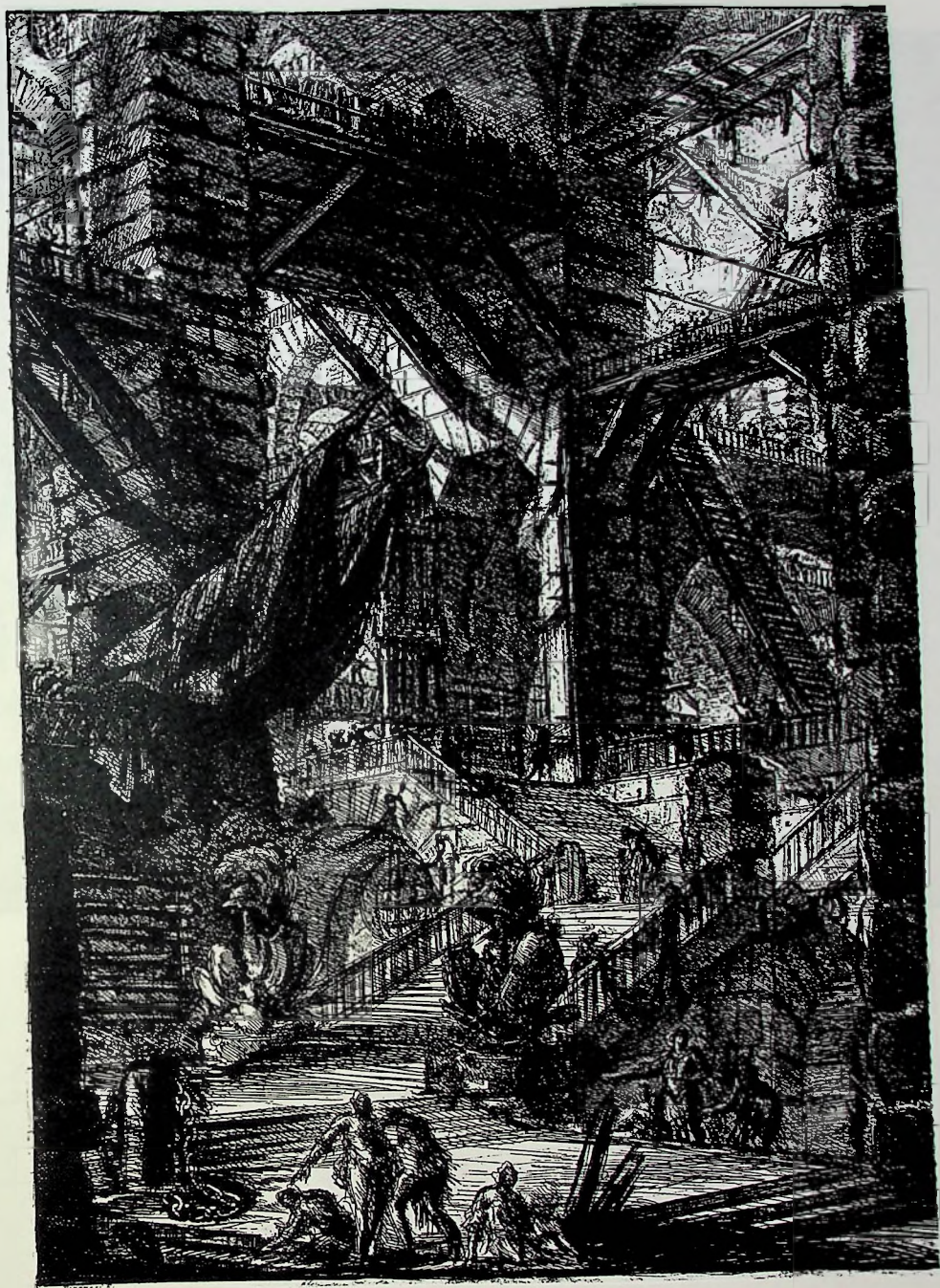


REMBRANDT "THE HUNDRED GUILDER PRINT" CHRIST WITH THE SICK.



REMBRANDT (AS ABOVE)  
DETAIL. [ENGRAVING]  
[ETCHING]





PIRANESI "THE STAIRCASE WITH TROPHIES"  
'CARCERI' SERIES. [ETCHING]



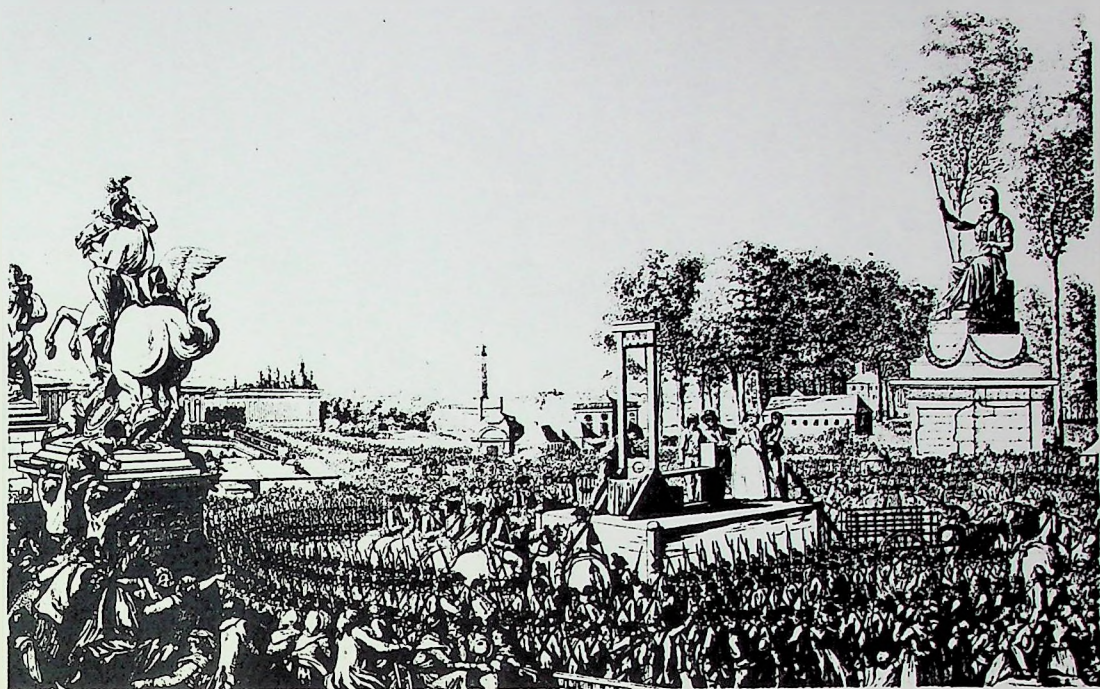


*Esto es lo peor!*

GOYA : "THIS IS THE 'ABSOLUTE' WORST!"

'THE DISASTERS OF WAR' SERIES [AQUATINT]





MONET - DUCLOS : 'EXECUTION OF MARIE ANTOINETTE'

[ENGRAVING] Below GILLES DEMARTEAU VENUS 1773 (ENGRAVING)







Chaucer. Clerk of Oxenore. Cook. Miller. Wife of Bath. Merchant. Surgeon. Man of Law. Hermit. Physician. Jeweller. 36

William Blake. Canterbury Pilgrims, State IV 1810  
(Engraving)

Below J.M.W Turner The stork and the  
Aqueduct 1806 (etching and mezzotint)







EDGAR DEGAS. PORTRAIT OF THE ENGRAVER Joseph Touraem.  
[ENGRAVING]









DAVID HOCKNEY (1973-74)

"THE ARTIST AND MODEL" [ETCHING]





ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG (1970) 'SIGNS'

[SILKSCREEN]



# REFERENCE : PRINTING TECHNIQUES

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## PRINTMAKING MEDIA

- LITHOGRAPHY:** A very direct method: draw straight onto the metal plate or stone : process and print. Offers an unrivalled variety of marks and tones. Print in monochrome or in colour.
- SCREENPRINT:** Also called *SILKSCREEN OR SERIGRAPH*. Stretched material over a frame forms a screen to hold a *STENCIL*, which stops the ink being pushed through the screen. A very popular technique as it is easily mastered and gives quick results.
- INTAGLIO :** This means making a pit or groove. On a metal plate (*COPPER, STEEL, ZINC*) this holds the ink which is then wiped off the surface, leaving ink only in the intaglio. The ink adheres to the paper when printed by pressure from the press. The intaglio can be made in the plate with tools (*ENGRAVING, DRYPOINT, ROULETTE, MEZZOTINT*), or by *ETCHING* with acids. Areas of the plate may be sealed against the acids ( using *SOFT* and *HARD GROUNDS, AQUATINT, SUGARLIFT*).
- RELIEF PRINTING:** The process of printing from an inked surface. In the case of *WOODCUTS, WOOD ENGRAVING* and *LINOCUTS* , the 'cuts' are usually non-printing areas. *PLEXIGLASS, VINYL, PVC TILES*, even cardboard (*COLLAGRAPH*) may be used as a support for the ink. Intaglio and relief techniques may be combined, inks may be treated to reject each other (*VISCOSITY* printing), light papers may be laminated onto heavier ones (*CHINE COLLÉ*). Prints may also be made from handheld *BLOCKS (WOOD, POTATO, SPONGE)*.
- PHOTO PRINTMAKING:** Using photographic techniques (for instance, *PHOTO ETCHING, HELIOGRAVURE*) as the starting point for, or elements of, a print. This offers photographers a direct way into printmaking, and artists the availability of incorporating 'readymade' images.