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An Exploration of Intaglio Processes Influenced by the Woodblock Style of Utamaro

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Eastern Illinois University

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AN EXPLORATION OF INTAGLIO PROCESSES INFLUENCED
BY THE WOODBLOCK STYLE OF UTAMARO
(TITLE)

BY

Lenore Branchaw

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts in Art
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1981
YEAR

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AN EXPLORATION OF INTAGLIO PROCESSES INFLUENCED
BY THE WOODBLOCK STYLE OF UTAMARO

BY

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B.A. IN ART
COLLEGE OF ST. FRANCIS
1976

ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Art
at the Graduate School of
Eastern Illinois University

CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1981

An exploration of the intaglio processes as influenced by the woodblock style of Kitagawa Utamaro is examined in this paper.

A brief introductory section is devoted to the history of European and Japanese printmaking. The Japanese, for the most part, used woodblock prints while the European artists more frequently made intaglio prints. The European intaglio prints were the work of one man while the more complicated woodblock prints were developed by the collective efforts of Japanese craftsmen.

The intaglio technique allows the artist to work with one plate, but many blocks of wood may be needed for effective linear design in the Japanese print.

To achieve the magnificent lines and colors in the Japanese prints, Utamaro embellished his style through beautiful designs of women.

Utamaro, the greatest print designer of the Golden-Age, was an inspiration to the linear style that was used to explore the intaglio process.

In subsequent sections, the intaglio process is explained and compared to the complicated relief process as practiced by the Japanese. Intaglio techniques and materials are described to give an idea of how they were affected by the metal plate that was used for printing.

Five color plates follow the text and present examples of the way Utamaro's style can be utilized when using the intaglio process instead of the complicated Japanese relief process. Three examples of the work by the artist Kitagawa Utamaro are included.

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PREFACE

The creation of images has always been one of man's primary activities. The Japanese and European artists are examples of how man created images through the use of prints. The Japanese used woodblock prints, and the European artists used intaglio prints. These two types of prints differ in their processes. The European intaglio prints were the work of one man while the more complicated woodblock prints were developed by the collective efforts of Japanese craftsmen.

The intaglio technique allows the artist to work with one plate, but many blocks of wood may be needed for effective design in the Japanese print. A diversity of methods can be used to make subtle changes in an intaglio plate but cannot be used in creating relief print.

EUROPEAN AND JAPANESE PRINTMAKING

Printmaking techniques for illustration, decoration and religious purposes have been used since the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. There are four major divisions of printmaking: lithography, serigraphy, relief printmaking, and intaglio.

Lithography was used by the English, Germans, and French. In 1803, the first lithographs appeared in England.¹ Alois Senefelder was the inventor of lithography.² A lithograph is best developed by using a fine grain stone or a specially prepared zinc plate which holds a greasy image that may be printed.

Serigraphy is a method of duplicating an image by the use of a stencil. One of the first stencil printing processes was used by the Fiji islanders, who made stencils by cutting perforations in banana leaves and pouring vegetable dyes through the openings to the bark cloth.³ Through the use of modern stencil materials such as plastic, paper, silk, and metal, the serigraphy process has become more sophisticated.

¹Wilhelm Weber, A History of Lithography (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), p. 10.

²Ibid.

³J.I. Biegeleisen, M.A., Silk Screen Stenciling as a Fine Art (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1942), p. 7.

Relief printmaking did not start with the Japanese; it was used by T'ang China. The Japanese used it during the Fujiware period for background painting and scripture writings.⁴

The Japanese artists exhibit prime examples of texture and color in the prints they created. A Japanese colored print is a reproduction of a drawing engraved onto the woodblock.⁵

Through the complicated efforts of five craftsmen, the publisher, designer, engraver, printer, and papermaker, the Japanese woodblock print was produced. The publisher was commissioned to work and co-ordinate the operation of distributing the finished prints.

The designer created the drawing on transparent paper. Later he would indicate the colors by painting them on a "pull" or proof from the "key-block."⁶

The Japanese engraver was trained to cut away everything on the block, other than an outline of the design. The engraver would paste the drawing face-down on a piece of cherry wood, then cut around the lines with a knife, clearing the wood between the lines which was left in high relief.⁷

⁴Peter C. Swann, An Introduction to the Arts of Japan (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, Ltd., 1958), pp. 180-81.

⁵Ann Freeborn Priestley, How to Know Japanese Colour Prints (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1927), p. 1.

⁶J. Hillier, Japanese Masters of the Colour Prints (New York: Phaidon Press, Ltd., 1954), p. 14.

⁷Ibid., p. 15.

The Japanese did not use a press when working with the woodblock. Instead, the printer would apply pressure with the aid of the baren tool.⁸ The printer would rub over the inked and raised lines, and thus apply pressure to the print by rubbing the baren over the back of the paper.

The fifth person involved with the printing process was the papermaker. The paper was hand-made from mulberry bark to enhance the colors.⁹ Watercolors mixed with a medium of rice paste was used for coloring the prints.¹⁰

Japan's most individual contribution to the world of art is the color print. The Ukiyo-e school is noted for the "single sheet prints" and also woodblock prints.¹¹

The meaning of Ukiyo-e is "pictures of the floating world."¹² The artists from the Ukiyo-e period designed prints of beautiful women from the merchant class. One of the most famous and skillful artists during the Ukiyo-e period was Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806).¹³ He was an accomplished artist of substantial attainments in the areas of

⁸Frank Whitford, Japanese Prints and Western Painters (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1977), p. 52.

⁹J. Hillier, Utamaro Colour Prints and Painting (New York: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1961), p. 14.

¹⁰Priestley, p. 2.

¹¹Richard Illing, Japanese Prints (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978), p. 2.

¹²Idem, Later Japanese Prints (New York: Phaidon Press, 1978), p. 1.

¹³Hillier, Utamaro, p. 9.

print design, book illustration and painting.¹⁴ As an artist, Utamaro worked with nature, and, in fact, became noted for his insect prints.

In 1788, Utamaro composed his first book of color prints titled Ehon Mushi Erabi (A Pictured Book of Selected Insects).¹⁵ Following Utamaro's Insect Book, the Shell Book and the "Hundred Screamers," or Bird Book, gained recognition.¹⁶ It was not until 1790 that Utamaro began creating pictures of women. His portrayal of women only came after working with other creatures of nature. Utamaro's prints of women exhibited a graceful style and vivid color of exquisite women with sumptuous garments,¹⁷ as seen in Plates VI-VIII.

Kitagawa Utamaro gained the leadership of the print movement in the early 1790's.¹⁸ During this period, Utamaro designed creations of famous houses of fashion in Edo.¹⁹

"Utamaro was the greatest print designer of the Golden-Age of nishiki-e,"²⁰ and had worked for 52 publishers by the time he died.²¹

¹⁴Hillier, Utamaro, p. 7.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁸Swann, p. 187.

¹⁹Hillier, Utamaro, p. 92.

²⁰Whitford, p. 67.

²¹Ibid.

Utamaro specialized in elegance and grace. His works of art were an inspiration in the use of texture, color, and style.

In Europe, intaglio prints have been the most traditional and, therefore, the most acceptable form of printmaking. Intaglio plates were found in Germany and Italy before 1450.²² The German engravers were the first to master the intaglio technique.²³ Masters such as Martin Schongauer and Albrecht Dürer were well-known engravers by the beginning of the 16th century.

The word intaglio includes etching, engraving, dry point, aquatint, and mezzotint. Intaglio defines an image engraved below the surface of the material, unlike a woodblock, in which the image is left on the surface.²⁴

Etching is a process in which lines are engraved into a copper or zinc plate with acid. These lines are then filled with ink and run through a press for printing the image.²⁵ The character of a print is an inexpensive form of reproduction in which the most sophisticated art can be developed.

²²Gerald Woods, The Craft of Etching and Lithography (London: Blandford Press, 1965), p. 11.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Jules Heller, Printmaking Today (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1972), p. 207.

²⁵Harry Sterneberg, Modern Methods and Materials of Etching (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1949), p. 6.

EUROPEAN METHOD INFLUENCED BY
JAPANESE STYLE

A plate is an obvious necessity when producing an etching. There are two popular plates used in etching: a copper plate which has a reddish tint and allows for finer work, and the zinc plate which is softer than the copper plate and has a bluish color which will change some colors and give them a dirty appearance.²⁶ Copper has a perfectly clean printing surface, thus the color is unaffected by the metal.²⁷ Copper, however, is much more expensive than zinc.

The primary problem in etching is to provide the plate with an acid-resistant ground, so the acid will not destroy the surface of the plate.²⁸ There are two types of grounds commonly used for etching: soft ground, which is a waxy substance which may be used for textured effects, and hard ground with the main ingredient being asphaltum, and this ground is used for producing fine line detail.²⁹

²⁶Manley Banister, Etching and Other Intaglio Techniques (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1974), p. 7.

²⁷Ibid., p. 34.

²⁸Heller, p. 210.

²⁹Banister, p. 67.

The original purpose of the soft ground method was to provide an appearance of a pencil or crayon drawing, but a variety of materials can be used to create a textured look when using soft ground. Lace, weeds, dried flowers, and netting are just a few. Many of these found objects can be used for smooth and rough texture and also may be incorporated for a background design. An object visually or texturally interesting is usually an asset to the etching.

Following the application of the ground by a roller, dauber, or brush, an etching needle is used to scratch the design through the ground to the metal allowing the bare metal to be exposed to the acid. The ground should not flake or chip when the needle is being drawn through the plate. The needle should move easily through the ground for a precise line. After etching the plate in acid, the plate must be cleaned with solvent and the ink must be worked into the bitten lines.

Ink is an important consideration both by color and physical properties. An oil base ink is used and has a luminous quality. Earth tones, such as black and brown, tend to work well on an etching. Chemical colors, such as yellow, will not work on zinc; wiping the plate causes oxidation which makes colors grey.

Viscosity, or the amount of oil in the ink, also affects the color of the print. Etching inks are of a heavy viscosity; they are thick and sticky and have to be worked into the plate. Oil is one of the essential ingredients in etching ink. It must be carefully measured, so the ink will

not be too runny and thin to work with.

To apply the ink to the plate, daubers and tarlatan are necessary. Daubers are pieces of felt or blanket material rolled into a tight cylinder used to spread the ink on the plate. Tarlatan is a stiff, coarsely woven cloth used to wipe the ink from the plate, so only a film of ink remains on the surface. The ink in the lines is not affected during this wiping process. Final wipe up is easy with pieces of newspaper.

Another major concern is the type of paper utilized. Papers range from the soft, absorbent variety to a very coarsely grained surface. The type of paper as well as the color affect the quality of the print. The excellence of the image also depends on the quality of the paper. In many instances, the paper itself becomes an integral part of the print. Color, absorbency, whiteness, smoothness, and grain are characteristics to consider when selecting the paper.

When the plate is completed, a press is needed for printing. A number of printing presses are available, but certain requirements should be met. The metal bed, or platen, should be large enough to accommodate the size of the plate. The pressure of the press should be adjusted, so all the recessed areas of the plate become filled with paper and receive the ink.

There are three blankets which are most often used to achieve the correct amount of press tension. The thinnest blanket, called the "fronting" blanket or "sizing catcher,"

is used for absorbing water from the damp paper.³⁰ The heaviest blanket, called the "cushion" blanket, is positioned above the sizing catcher.³¹ The "pusher" is the topmost blanket and receives the most wear.³² The blankets should be kept clean and free of ink, so the final result will be free of excess ink and dirt. After the proof is completed, the plate may require further work with the use of a scraper and burnisher. A scraper is a tool used for removing unwanted intaglio marks on the plate. It is a three-sided, hollow-ground steel knife set in a wooden handle which must be kept razor sharp. Any scored or roughened surface made by the scraper is then repolished and made smooth by the burnisher. A burnisher is a highly polished smooth steel instrument used with a little machine oil to achieve its purpose.

³⁰Banister, p. 39.

³¹Ibid., p. 40.

³²Ibid.

THE JAPANESE STYLE OF ART DEVELOPED
WITH THE METHOD OF INTAGLIO

Choosing the materials is only half the preparation; method should also be estimated. Technical options begin with the plate. Design, textural variety, formal representation, tone, and color are some examples of what affects the final print.

To achieve a variation of tone, the printer can use the process of aquatinting. Traditionally, this specific process of intaglio involves the application of a porous ground of rosin to the surface of the plate. The plate is then heated, melting the rosin into acid-resistant dots. "The acid pits the areas surrounding each particle of melted rosin and creates a cavity that will hold more or less ink dependent upon the length of the bite."³³ A thickly covered area of rosin on the plate will achieve a white area on the print. A thin coat of rosin will give dark value tones and have a grain-like effect.

Exciting textures and tones can be achieved by deciding which method to use and how to work the plate.

In etching, a needle is drawn into the ground allowing the plate to be exposed to the acid. The method of drypoint

³³Heller, p. 226.

and line engraving do not require ground to be laid nor acid to be used. A drypoint needle is used to scratch lines into the plate, emitting pieces of metal which form a "burr" on the plate.³⁴ A burr is in the form of a ridge of metal forced upward by the drypoint needle. The build up of ink around the burr creates rich, warm black lines. Variations of gray and black tones can be achieved from this method.

The drypoint needle scratches lines into the plate while the engraving tool, a burin, cuts a furrow through the metal.³⁵ A burin is a small hand tool, consisting of a small square steel rod held in a half-round wooden handle. The burin acts as a cutting agent to incise grooves or channels into the plate. Engraving is essentially a line technique.

Line engraving on metal is the most decisive and most direct of all the intaglio processes; it demands control and discipline. In order to work the plate properly, a variety of skills and specific techniques have to be learned.

Engraving requires full control of the burin's cut of a direct line. It is necessary to hold and sometimes move the plate against the burin. "The mobility of the plate is crucial to both the cutting of curved lines and the recurring needle to approach the image from many directions."³⁶

³⁴Heller, p. 238.

³⁵Banister, p. 84.

³⁶Walter Chamberlain, Etching and Engraving (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1972), p. 30.

The use of the burin can create tone, texture, and, in a sense, color.

An immeasurable range of gray tones can be achieved by carefully spacing fine and broken lines and by abrupt cuts through the effect of dotting. A dotting effect can be made by a group of short, abrupt cuts, facing up spikes of metal, leaving a triangular mark in the plate. Round dots are cut by rotating the plate with the burin's point engaged in the metal at varying angles.³⁷

Color combined with light and dark tones make it possible to suggest shapes. Color is not a separate entity; it enhances the quality of the intaglio print. Color should not be used to fill in space, form, or movement; it should be used to intensify the textures drawn in the plate. Tones and shadows become rich and deep through the combination of texture and color. The elements of design interplay due to the amount and intensity of the color.

³⁷Chamberlain, p. 31.

PRINTING THE PLATE

When the printing method or methods are chosen, the printer may begin printing the plate. For an intaglio print, it is important to bevel the edges of the plate with a file to inhibit the sharp edge of the plate from slicing through the paper or the blankets. A properly beveled edge allows the blankets to move smoothly through the press and safely over the plate.

Beveling is carried out by placing the plate flat on a table, so the edge overhangs slightly. A 45-degree angle should be maintained when beveling, rounding off each corner with a file. Residual particles of metal from filing should be removed from the surface of the plate to eliminate surface scratches.

The surface of the plate should be thoroughly cleaned before the drawn work is initiated and the ground applied. Grease on the plate will cause the ground to lift during the biting.

The most effective way to clean a plate is with a thin paste of whiting powder. When the plate has been cleaned, it should be rinsed with water. Whiting powder, not grease, may remain on the plate.

When the plate is thoroughly cleaned, the ground can be applied. The hard ground in solid form is applied by a roller or a dauber. The plate must be heated on a hot plate. The

wax in the hard ground will melt and coat the metal plate. When the warm plate is smeared with wax, the roller or dauber is used to roll out the ground as evenly as possible. A slightly transparent rich, dark brown color should be maintained.³⁸

After the ground is laid, the sketch can be transferred to the plate. The drawing should be sketched on paper with soft lead and placed face down on the ground plate. With little pressure, the sketch and plate are slowly run through the press, or the paper may be burnished to release the drawing to the ground on the plate.

An etching needle is used to draw the design. A line-etching can have various textures by using a combination of thick and thin lines. Line-etching can be formed in stages. For instance, after the first etch has been accomplished, the wax and varnish are cleaned off. A new ground is relaid, and more drawing is added. The entire process is repeated several times to build up areas of tone and texture.

Before the plate is immersed into the acid bath, the back and edges must be fully protected from the acid. One or more coats of liquid varnish is placed on the back and edges to protect the plate from strong acid or long periods of biting. Some plates are precoated on the back, and no coating is required.

³⁸Chamberlain, p. 50.

Regardless of how creatively the needle or drypoint is used to suggest tone and texture, two other etching processes offer greater range for variety. They are aquatint and soft ground. Both are complete processes and can be combined with line etching. "Soft-ground etching, unlike aquatint which is a purely tonal process, can be employed equally well for texture and line."³⁹

A soft ground, which is a non-drying acid resist, is a combination of wax ground mixed with either grease, tallow, or vaseline.⁴⁰

The wax is applied the same way as hard ground, either by roller or dauber. The plate must be thoroughly cleaned before the plate can be covered with melted wax. The ground should be thin, even and dark brown in color, so textured impressions can be applied.

Soft ground lacks the firm consistency as compared to the surface of hard ground. Therefore, the detailed, precise drawing suitable for hard ground is not good for soft ground.

In the eighteenth century, the purpose of the soft ground method was to achieve a pencil or crayon drawing.⁴¹ Today's contemporary etchings utilize soft ground as a means of obtaining a certain quality of lines and textures.

³⁹Chamberlain, p. 55.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 60.

The method of obtaining a textured surface is to place materials such as lace, weeds, dried flowers, etc., on the waxed plate. The plate is then covered with wax paper and run through the press. The covering paper is then removed, and the material is peeled carefully off the ground.

Stopping out varnish is brushed on areas not desired in the plate and on the back of the plate before immersion into the acid. After the biting has taken place, a new ground can be laid and further textures can be employed when necessary.

It is essential when working with soft ground textures to be imaginative, inventive, ingenious, and experimental in the choice of materials and their use.

Of all the traditional etching processes, aquatint is the one most widely used for creating areas of tone. The dropping of powdered rosin on the surface of a heated plate and biting in acid can create a wide array of tones.

The heat is applied evenly over the entire surface of the plate. The rosin powder will suddenly turn color and melt to the metal. When the rosin has fused to the plate, it should be removed from the heat and left to cool. Areas where tone is not wanted are "stopped out," and the plate is then placed in acid for biting.

Rosin ground can be removed after the plate has been taken from the acid bath. Alcohol or shellac remover is used when cleaning the rosin from the plate.

Paper also affects the appearance of the finished print. A strongly woven paper will add its own texture to the image

and will also affect the ink transfer and the evenness of color. Watercolor paper, smooth drawing paper, and evenly grained printing paper work well with the intaglio process; these produce different levels of richness and tonal quality.

While the paper is being moistened in a bath of water, the plate can be prepared for inking. A heavily viscous ink or etching ink, which will stay in the depressions of the plate, is needed.

Ink is applied to the plate with a dauber. Care must be taken to push ink into every depression, or improper tone will result. When all the color is applied, the wiping process starts.

A flat pad of tarlatan removes the excess ink. Further wiping should be done carefully. Newspaper is sometimes used to remove any excess ink and gives a light surface tone. Too much wiping will produce a pale print; too little wiping may cause fuzzy edges, unclear areas, or unwanted textures.

The actual printing process follows. A press must be used as there is no other really successful way to pull the ink from every groove and crevice. The press bed should be smooth and clean so as not to soil the print or to alter the pressure. Newsprint or clean paper covers the platen, with the plate resting on the top. Carefully remove a sheet of paper from the water and place it between two blotters. The excess water may be removed by rolling a large roller over the blotters. The paper is centered over the plate and must not be removed until after printing.

Moving the paper might cause some ink to transfer to the sheet.

Three felt blankets are used to achieve the correct pressure. Different thicknesses of padding can alleviate variations in the height of the plate and regulate the amount of pressure desired. The plate is then run through the press at a previously determined pressure. The plate may be run through the press two times to insure a complete image transfer.

The blankets are placed over the press, and the paper is carefully removed from the plate. The print may be attached to a flat board with staples one and one-half inches apart. The board must be kept level to assure uniform drying and a flat print.

Problems can arise in the intaglio process. If the ink furs out or collects in certain areas of the print, the printmaker must either reduce the pressure of the press, wipe the plate more, or reduce the amount of plate oil. Paper sticking or tearing implies that the pressure was too great, the ink too stiff, or the removal of the paper was too rapid.

Uneven printing can be caused from the ink's being too dry or too stiff; the press may have too little pressure; the plate may not be level; the paper may be too wet or too dry; a foreign substance may reside in the intagliate or not enough care went into the inking process. Wrinkles in the paper are caused by any number of errors: the blankets might be too wet, stiff, wrinkled, or stretched; the paper too wet

or unevenly damp; the paper too thin; or the pressure too great. Another common problem is the appearance of white areas; increasing the pressure or applying more ink should improve the looks of the print.

Beneficial learning experiences occur from all these unsatisfactory situations. One learns that careful planning and overdependence on the materials themselves should be limited when working on a print.

The intaglio prints are more than just representational images. They are richly textured, highly varied tones and strongly experimental graphic forms providing tactile and visual interest. The intaglio print speaks for itself: It may draw its inspiration from other art forms, and it may have developed from the printmaking processes, but it gains its power and strength from being exactly what it is. It is a creation of the artist, a visually and tactilely stimulating work of art.⁴²

⁴²E.S. Lumsden, The Art of Etching (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1962), p. 40.

PERSONAL APPROACH TO INTAGLIO AS INSPIRED

BY THE RELIEF PRINTS OF UTAMARO

Historically, intaglio is recognized as a creative innovation to the printmaking world. Individually, intaglio has become an expressive visual outlet, a synthesis of texture, line, and tone. The approach to the medium illustrated here involves the modeling technique. Subsequent lines, textures, and tones are defined by the blending and wiping of color.

Utamaro's expressive style of line and detail illustrated in the Japanese relief prints was an inspiration to explore through the many techniques of the intaglio processes.

Experimenting with the intaglio processes was less complicated than the Japanese relief prints. Utamaro's style of drawing was illustrated on metal plates instead of the involved woodblock process. Materials, methods, and problems of the individual prints follow.

Plate I

Reminiscence

Photograph I

Technical Data: Created July 1979, edition of 10

Printmaking paper

Grumbacher ink

Plate size 4" x 6"

Framed size 16" x 18"

Reminiscence was created with the technique of hard and soft ground. Hard ground was brushed on the zinc plate, and the drawing was transferred to the metal. With an etching needle, the long distorted figure began to emerge. Long curved lines were drawn through the hard ground to show contrast and movement. To complete the effect, patches of crosshatched lines were used to show dark, almost solid areas of color.

The concept of the background texture was to establish an adequate appearance. Soft ground was melted over the plate and left to cool. Dried flowers were placed at random in the background and forced into the soft ground with the use of the press. The flowers were then removed, and the plate was placed in the acid bath. After five minutes in the solution, the plate was removed, and the ground was cleaned off with solvent. When the plate was cleaned, the inking process began.

Three different colors, black, brown, and crimson, were experimented with. The use of the black ink did not enhance the style of the etching. The color was too harsh and destroyed the soft quality of the floral background. When brown ink was used, the printed image was dull. However, when crimson was applied, the total effect was rich and warm.

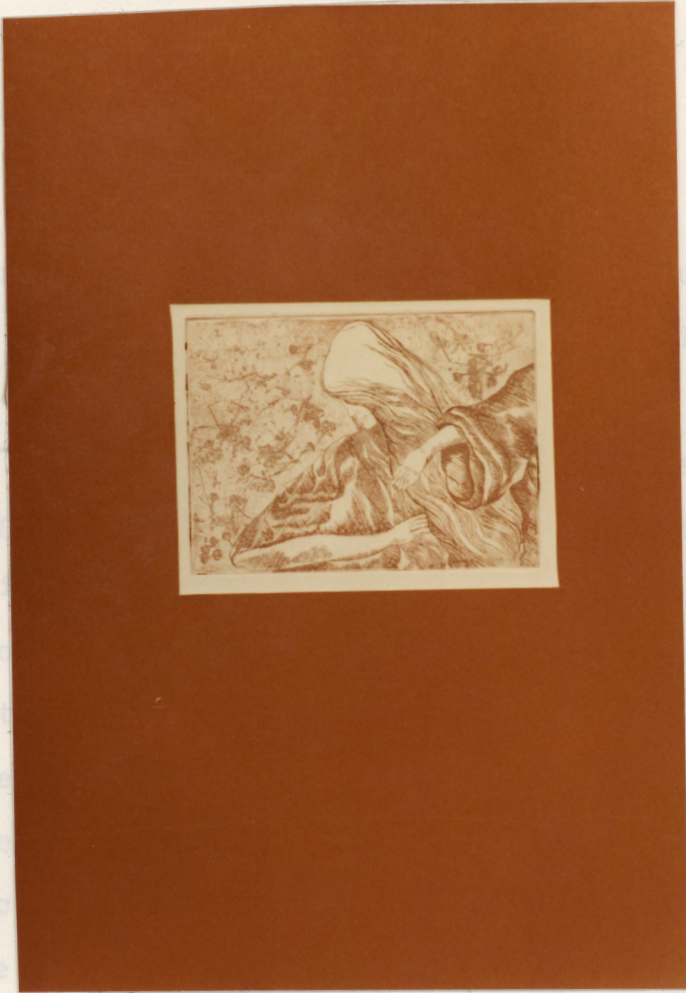
Plate II

Serene Beauty

Photograph II

Technical Data: Created July 1980, edition of 11

Printmaking paper



1/10 Reminiscence 7/79

Next ink was applied; Lenore Branchaw, and the first proof

was made. The plate printed light. Some of the patterns

were so light the method of drypoint was added. After

Plate II

Serene Beauty

Photograph II

Technical Data: Created July 1980, edition of 11

Printmaking paper

Grumbacher ink

Plate size 6" x 9"

Framed size 11" x 14"

Kitagawa Utamaro's prints gave the world a graceful dalliance, uninterrupted pleasure, and an illusion of what the real Japanese world was like.

In 1796-1800, Utamaro worked with prints that portrayed head designs on a very large scale.⁴³ Utamaro's head designs were the inspiration for Serene Beauty.

In working with Serene Beauty, different methods were experimented with. Hard ground was brushed over the plate, and the design was drawn with an etching needle. A variety of textures and patterns was needed to form the design in the fabric. When drawn, the plate was put into the acid bath. The ground was removed with solvent, and the plate was cleaned.

Next ink was applied to the plate, and the first proof was made. The plate printed light. Some of the patterns were so light the method of drypoint was added. After

⁴³James A. Michener, Japanese Prints (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959), p. 27.

scraping for several hours into the plate, the contrast began to emerge. The second proof also needed the drypoint method, and darker tones resulted.

Another problem still had to be resolved. In one area of the fabric, the design did not co-ordinate with the other patterns of the cloth. Darker value tones were needed in this specific area. The process of aquatinting was used. The porous ground of rosin was applied to the small area of the plate and heated. The remainder of the plate was protected with hard ground. The plate was left in the acid for eleven minutes. When the plate was clean and the ink applied, a third proof was pulled.

After pulling the proof, the texture was rich and vibrant. The contrast produced form, and the aquatinting was a success.

Plate III

The Wedding

Photograph 111

Technical Data: Created June 1980, edition of 11

Printmaking paper

Grumbacher ink

Plate size 4½" x 6"

Book size 6" x 10"

This etching was designed for a wedding prayer book.

The design is
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background.

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Hard gr
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and rich tone



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Lenore Branchaw

Plate III

The Wedding

Photograph III

Technical Data: Created June 1980, edition of 11

Printmaking paper

Grumbacher ink

Plate size 4½" x 6"

Book size 6" x 10"

This etching was designed for a wedding prayer book. The design interest was in developing a soft lace texture for the foreground and a sturdy, strong texture for the background.

Hard ground was brushed over the plate, and curved lines were scratched into the surface to provide the figures with a graceful appearance. To accomplish this, small curved lines and dots were drawn into the plate. The use of vertical and horizontal lines was developed for the background.

Black ink offered the necessary depth and rich tone needed for this etching.

Plate IV

In The Garden

Photograph IV

Technical Data: Created July 1980, edition of 10

Printmaking paper

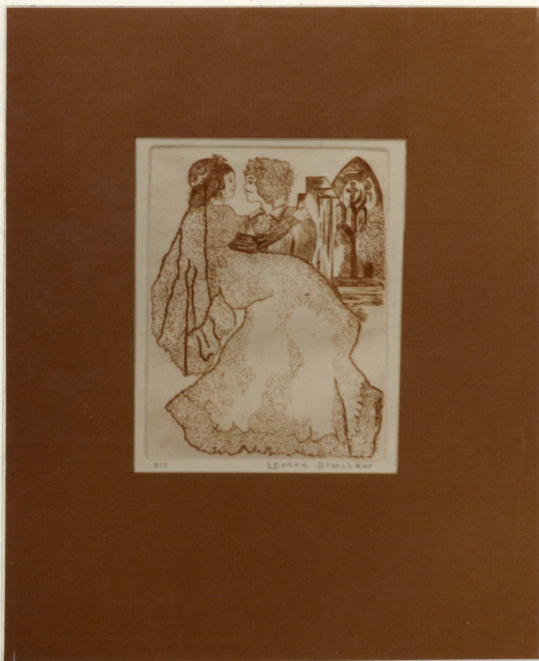
Grumbacher ink

Plate size 4½" x 6"

Framed size 10" x 12"

A diversity of textures was needed to create the flowing pattern.

This plate required the use of the etching needle. In dealing with such a small area, the etching needle was used to create a subtle texture. The plate required such a small area of overpowering texture would have transition, contrast, and working with the etching needle and ground. The texture of the fabric could not be subtle a texture of textural transition were utilized when working with the etching needle.



6/11 The Wedding 7/80

Lenore Branchaw

One of the beauty and figures.⁴⁴ To develop the markings for this plate, the technique of drypoint was used to achieve darker value tones. Through the tedious process of scraping, a metal contrast, which was important to the plate, was achieved.

⁴⁴ Peter C. Swann, The Art of Japan (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1966), p. 203.

Plate IV

In The Garden

Photograph IV

Technical Data: Created July 1980, edition of 10

Printmaking paper

Grumbacher ink

Plate size 4½" x 6"

Framed size 10" x 12"

A diversity of textures was needed to create the flowing pattern in the fabrics.

This plate was primarily tooled. The etching needle was used to draw the design into the hard ground. The plate required great care in its design. In dealing with such a small area, the texture of the fabric could not be overpowering, yet, at the same time, too subtle a texture would have little impact. The techniques of textural transition, contrast of tone, and hue effect were utilized when working with the small areas of the plate.

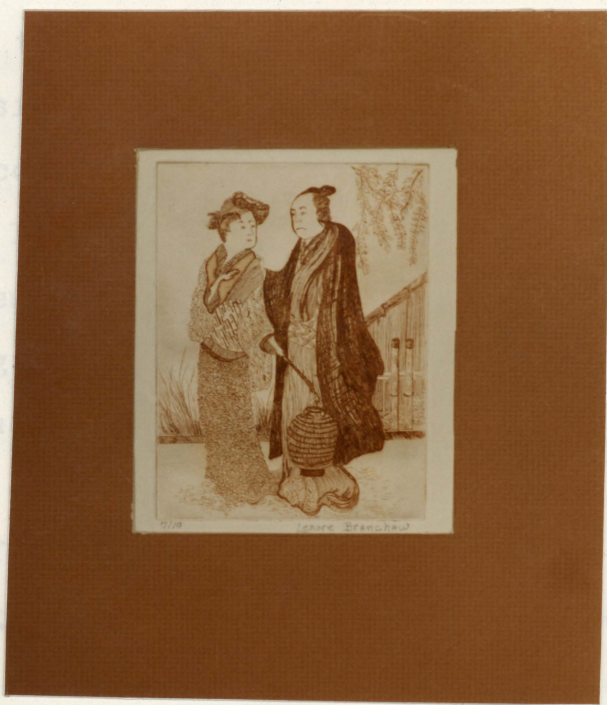
One of Utamaro's striking features of his prints was the beauty and extravagance of the robes worn by many of his figures.⁴⁴ To develop a deeper contrast against the delicate markings for this plate, the technique of drypoint was used to achieve darker value tones. Through the tedious process of scraping, a metal contrast, which was important to the plate, was achieved.

⁴⁴Peter C. Swann, The Art of Japan (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1966), p. 293.

Lower Blossoms

Photograph 1

Technical Data: Created August 1980, edition of 16
Charcoal paper
Grumbacher ink
Plate size 12" x 18"
Framed size 18" x 24"



2/10 In The Garden 7/80

Lenore Branchaw

⁴⁵Hillier, Utamaro, p. 91.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Plate V

Flower Blossoms

Photograph V

Technical Data: Created August 1980, edition of 16

Charcoal paper

Grumbacher ink

Plate size 12" x 18"

Framed size 18" x 24"

One of the important factors for a Japanese artist's being successful was keeping up with the fashions of the kimonos and colorful costumes.

Around 1795, Utamaro began to lengthen the form of the female figures that he worked with.⁴⁵ Two reasons Utamaro began to lengthen his figures were because the Japanese women were inclined to be short and plump. The long figure gave him the opportunity to work with beautiful lines and exaggerated forms.⁴⁶

To exaggerate the length of the figures in Flower Blossoms, a large plate was utilized. The larger area required more patterns on the fabric of the figures.

The wider Japanese prints are known as kakemono-e,

⁴⁵Hillier, Utamaro, p. 91.

⁴⁶Ibid.

"hanging-thing pictures," and the narrowest prints as hashira-e, "pillar pictures."⁴⁷

Hard ground was brushed on the zinc plate, and the drawing was transferred. An etching needle was worked into the ground to form the variety of texture. When drawn, the plate was put into the acid bath for 12 minutes. The ground was removed with solvent, and the plate was cleaned.

After inking the first proof, the background printed light. Darker contrast was needed in some areas of the fabric and in the background.

Hard ground was brushed over the plate a second time. With an etching needle, pieces of hard ground were flaked off. The plate was then left in the acid for 15 minutes.

Next the ground was removed, and the plate was cleaned. The second proof showed improvement. The background was dark in contrast and had bold texture.

Areas of fabric were still weak and needed to be improved. Drypoint was used to bring tone out in areas of the cloth.

After pulling the third proof, the tone and texture were rich and vibrant. The contrast needed in the design was a success.

Color was very important in developing Flower Blossoms. Blue was the first color and only resulted in a harsh, unattractive image. Black was then used, and the result was

⁴⁷James A. Michener, The Floating World (New York: Random House, 1954), p. 27.

clear texture and sharp contrast. However, a color that was soft and exquisite was needed for Flower Blossoms. Brown ink on light brown charcoal paper was selected. The total effect was rich and warm; the design was strong due to color, texture, and tone.



1/16 Flower Blossoms 8/30

Lenore Branchaw

JAPANESE PRINTS CREATED BY THE ARTIST

KITAGAWA UTAMARO



Boarding a Pleasure-barge 1782

Kitagawa Utamaro



Lovers 1788

Kitagawa Utamaro



The Famous Eight Views of Omi 1797

Kitagawa Utamaro

PERSONAL CONCLUSION

Intaglio is an exciting and enjoyable medium. Specific methods and traditional techniques can be practiced, along with an innovative approach.

Working with the Japanese style of drawing and applying it to the intaglio process is exciting, inspirational, and rewarding.

The most enjoyable experience with working with intaglio was being able to develop the Japanese style without the complicated technique of the relief process. Being able to work with the Japanese drawings and complete the intaglio process without other craftsmen also is rewarding.

In opposition to the intaglio process, Kitagawa Utamaro was a chief source of inspiration, and his style of beauty and extravagance in using Japanese robes and figures was apparent in all his prints.

As an inspirational artist, Utamaro allows the change from woodcut to intaglio to be an exciting medium. Utamaro's expressive technique of line, texture, and color made the Japanese life a beautiful way to live.

Working with intaglio makes one aware of the diverse methods that can be utilized to form texture and tone. A combination of these two sources precipitates a wide variety of light and dark areas to achieve a beautiful image. It

also seems apparent that the intaglio plate is as much a work of art as the resulting print.

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