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A THESIS WRITTEN
TO AVOID WRITING ABOUT MY OWN WORK

by

Mary Lee Gray

The painter wishes to express her sincere
appreciation to Dr. J. B. the Faculty of the Honors
the Consolidated University of North Carolina
work, for his kind in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
the project. Master of Fine Arts

(pt. 2 in

Greensboro

1957

Approved by

Helen Thrush
Adviser

PROLOGUE

This paper, as the title indicates, is an essay written to avoid writing a philosophical discussion of the author's own work. It constitutes a chronological survey of the most outstanding characteristics of the painting arts from the late fourteenth century to the early twentieth, with a discussion of

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The painter wishes to express her sincere appreciation to Dr. John Oppen, director of the honors work, for his kind advice and encouragement throughout the project.

and sectional quality, as they evolved from their economic heritage. Where it was believed pertinent, the background from which these arts developed and the atmosphere in which they were created has been briefly indicated.

The theme of the paper may best be stated as "these are remembered impressions"; impressions of original works and reproductions, and impressions, gained from necessarily limited research, of the period and the artist, either as an individual or as a group, which together produced the prints.

GERMAN EXHIBIT

1. TWO FIGURES, woodcut
2. KISS, cardboard-cut
3. PORTRAIT, background and drypoint
4. WOMAN, monotype

PREFACE

This paper, as the title indicates, is an essay written to avoid writing a philosophical discussion of the author's own work. It constitutes a chronological survey of the most outstanding characteristics of German printing arts from the late fourteenth century to the early twentieth, with a discussion of the relationships discovered between these German prints and contemporary Occidental prints. Emphasis has been placed on the woodcut, engraving, etching, and lithograph, their physical characteristics and emotional quality, as they evolved from their Germanic heritage. Where it was believed pertinent, the background from which these arts developed and the atmosphere in which they were created has been briefly indicated.

The theme of the paper may best be stated as "these are remembered impressions"; impressions of original prints and reproductions, and impressions, gained from necessarily limited research, of the period and the artist, either as an individual or as a group, which together produced the prints.

15. UNTO ME, drypoint
16. FOUR STERS, engraving and woodcut
17. THIS IS THE CIRCUS TIME, etching
18. RIVER PEOPLE, woodcut and cardboard-cut

THESIS EXHIBIT

1. TWO FIGURES, woodcut
2. FISH, cardboard-cut
3. PORTRAIT, softground and drypoint
4. WOMAN, monotype
- X 5. MIST AND BIRDS, etching
- * 6. THE LITTLE TOWN, woodcut
7. JOURNEY, woodcut series
- I Intro * I GERMINATION
- II Source * II SUN-RAIN-AIR
- III Growth * III GROWING, GROWING AND WORK
Regeneration
- IV The Contemporary * IV SORROW-LOVE-FEAR
- X + * V REST...
- X + * VI AND DECAY
- * VII GERMINATION TWO
- * 8. A WOMAN, woodcut
- X 9. REFLECTIONS, serigraph
- * 10. WAITING, serigraph
- * 11. NOON-HOUR, lithograph
- * 12. MOMENTARY, lithograph
- * 13. MASKS, serigraph
- X 14. ALL THE GAMES WE PLAY, etching
15. UNTO ME, drypoint
16. FOUR STEPS, engraving and woodcut
17. THIS IS THE CIRCUS TIME, etching
18. RIVER PEOPLE, woodcut and cardboard-cut

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One obscure day in the 15th century, an unknown German discovered that a block of wood, cut into, inked and printed on a newly plentiful product, **CONTENTS** could be produced, distributed and sold profitably. Herein lies a significant root of modern concepts.

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These arts termed graphic stand astride the "line of utility" which is said to divide the practical division from the fine division of the arts. At all times, that line is hard to distinguish, often, impossible, colored as it is with the age, opinions and personalities. Basically, the printing arts are practical arts; all are means of reproduction and have always been used as such. Beside a technical nature, however, each is potentially a powerful, yet subtle, means of expression; each when used honestly according to its unique nature, has a potential unsurpassed.

Prints, like literature and the printed word, can serve both science and beauty, as the communication of truth and the communication of immediate pleasure (in its widest sense as emotive power); or as Krauss put it in praising the prints of Durer, the natural aspect of a thing and

the perfect symmetry and harmony. Fine prints...
possess uniqueness, magic, I spiritual impress,
the stamp of vivid personality, a ringing quality
of line or mass, some telling economy of expression
that satisfies in a flash of immediate comprehension.

One obscure day in the 14th century, an unknown German discovered that a block of wood, cut into, inked and printed on a newly plentiful product, paper, could be produced, distributed and sold profitably. Herein lies a significant root of modern concepts, for this was the inception of Occidental graphic arts, the printing arts, which like a spring-vine, eventually expanded into many directions. This paper is concerned, however, primarily with only four major printing techniques, the woodcut, the engraving, the etching and the lithograph, as they developed from their Germanic origins.

These arts termed graphic stand astride the "line of utility" which is said to divide the practical division from the fine division of the arts. At all times, that line is hard to distinguish, often, impossible, colored as it is with the age, opinions and personalities. Basically, the printing arts are practical arts; all are means of reproduction and have always been used as such. Despite a technical nature, however, each is potentially a powerful, yet subtle, means of expression; each when used honestly according to its unique nature, has a potential unsurpassed.

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the perfect symmetry and harmony. Fine prints... possess uniqueness, magic, a spiritual impress, the stamp of vivid personality, a singing quality of line or mass, some telling economy of expression that satisfies in a flash of immediate comprehension.¹

With few exceptions, the printing arts were invented, or at least used extensively for the first time, in Germany, and were produced there with a distinct strength and vigor unequalled by any other nation. German printmaking was at first essentially a business venture overseen by an alliance of designer, cutter, and printer, becoming, as it matured during the sixteenth century, more personal. Little by little, the print lost its expressive power, growing stagnant, without nationality, and did not regain either until this century. The prints constitute a unique expression not only of artistic concepts but of the whole of German culture, its traditions and heritage, ideals, preoccupations in spiritual and worldly affairs, economic life.

German art is almost never "art for art's sake", but rather, art for the sake of a philosophy of life: an attitude which the Latin concept of art rejects. German artists are romantic, mystical, irrational. They are concerned with emotional, philosophical or scientific problems. An Albrecht Altdorfer expresses the German's mystic union with nature in his landscapes of the German forest; Albrecht Durer, the interest in the world of science and metaphysics... The ornamental line, involved and complex composition, the curious surging upward, the preference for the small form... and above all the pre-eminence of the linear tradition, as opposed to the plastic tradition of the Latin, are constant characteristics of German form.²

¹C. Zigrosser, Six Centuries of Fine Prints (New York: Covici-Friede, 1937), pp. 10-11.

²Helen A. Read, German Art from the Fifteenth to the Twentieth Century, (Philadelphia: Franklin Printing Company, 1936), pp. 9-10.

II

The early German territory, extending from the shore of the North Sea to the Alps and bounded in on either side by the rivers Rhine and Elbe, has been described as "one vast forest, broken by swamps and meadows, with here and there a stretch of open land."³ Here the Teutonic tribes wandered, and worshipped and fought, and took the characteristics of their land for themselves. They were described by the Romans as powerful giants with wild red-bleached hair, warriors, who fought as readily as they breathed, living only for the battle. They were a people with deep loyalty to the family unit and to himself as a warrior, but to nothing else. The forests formed an almost insurmountable wall around the territory, shutting the outside out, and the German in to himself, forcing him to develop into a unique personality and an independent culture. Even through the Middle Ages, the German had slight contact with foreign thought, or culture, or produce. The forests, too, were the religion of the people, the grove was his temple, the oak was worshipped as sacred and royal; in the trees all around him dwelt his gods and demons, conceived in the image of himself, as well as other spirits which ruled in every aspect of German life.

In his constant struggle for survival, the early German had

³Francis B. Gummere, Germanic Origins, A Study in Primitive Culture, (London: David Nutt, 1892), p. 35.

time for little else than the necessities of life; such art that developed was the decoration reserved for tools and weapons. It is essentially linear in conception and execution. It is a beauty founded in simple, vital strength, a kind of fierce searching beauty, a longing for the unknown. At the height of German artistic powers, it seems to be a beauty of perpetual movement, spiritual as well as physical. Gummere said of the earliest German art:

... the sense of quiet beauty was foreign to his mind. In his poetry, in those kennings which gave him almost his only chance for description, we get a few glimpses at the nature which surrounded him; but it is the dash of waves, the hiss of hail and snow upon a wintry ocean, howl of wind and storm, sweep of huge bird of prey hovering "dewy-feathered" in the air and eager for carrion - battle pieces, we must call them, but no still life at all... the quiet which reigns in Germanic description of nature is the quietness of desolation.⁴

In their beginnings, the German people had roamed in fierce tribes, and although they gradually acquiesced to civilization and began to settle in villages and towns, in their imaginative lives they roamed still through fierce and strange worlds which they portrayed through their arts. They were a people of contradiction, of extremes, who later were to depict gentle madonnas and evil fantastic beasts, day-to-day life and vividly conceived images of a spirit world within the frame of one print. Looking back to their heritage of the forests, Gummere found what he considered an explanation for this antithesis.

These swamps, these vast and sullen forests made the German of fitful and passionate temper, savage, inclined to gloom or unchecked revelry.⁵

⁴Gummere, p. 475.

⁵Ibid., p. 37.

After the fall of the Roman Western Empire, the Germanic tribes began the lengthly and uneven course which was to unite them as a nation. But the old customs of warring and independence died hard; leaders emerged, but none strong enough to knit together the tribes. No until the reign of Charlesmagne, in the 9th century, were the German people finally united under a single ruler. During these centuries of momentous changes, the art came far from its crude and tentative beginnings, although it too, took an uneven path. There were decades, even whole centuries of comparative sterility in the arts, but there was as well, exploration and experimentation, mostly under the tutelage of the monasteries, then finally great progress. Under the Ottonian kings, under the stress of violent conflict, the arts expanded almost instantaneously into a powerful and distinctly German expression. The expressive decorative line essential to primitive and early work reasserted itself, in almost "electric vitality, causing draperies to twist and coil or straighten to tongues of flame." The artist distorted figures wildly to express the "tortured subjectivity" of the age. There was then, as later, an intense preoccupation with death, and the last judgment.⁶ It was a time which foretold of the rise of the graphic arts.

In the 12th century, within the reign of the mightly Frederick Barbarossa, the "greatest of all German kings", were laid down the

⁶Henrich Thelen, "Ottonian Miniatures", Graphis, 30:164-173, 1950.

sociological foundations upon which graphic art and printing were built. The imperial free cities arose, fighting for existence, protected from plunder by stout walls. As travel became safer, trade expanded, along the rivers from town to town, and the Burgher class established itself to become powerful and wealthy in the course of the next two centuries. They demanded goods and services of which they had not dreamed before; they began to travel more widely, south to Italy, with the crusades to the Holy Land and the East, north to the Netherlands, returning with new concepts of philosophy, standards of luxury, as well as of knowledge. With leisure time at their disposal, the Burgher class learned to read, and demanded books within their means; they had contacts with the arts, and demanded an art which they could grasp and understand, and could afford to purchase. With the introduction of the woodcut print on paper, that desire was satisfied.

No dated single woodblock before 1418 has been discovered by scholars, although references have been found in documents and city records to block printers and designers and transactions between them. Little industries, known as *imageries*, were established during the first decades of the century to reproduce both worldly and saintly pictures, most of which were sold to the Church to be resold as souvenirs. The principal subjects of these early prints, those produced by the *imageries*, the *gildes*, and the *free cutters*

Arthur W. Hind, *A History of Printing*, (Volume I, London: Constable and Company, 1933), p. 95.

III

Probably the first use of the woodcut as printed on paper was in the reproduction of playing cards, which according to Hind, are known to have been introduced into Germany by 1377.⁷ These early cards, of which only fragments survive, were probably simple straightforward cuts, although undoubtedly skillful, as they were based on a long tradition of cutting blocks intended for fabric prints. Later cards, dating from mid-15th century are similar in design to contemporary playing cards, lacking refinement, yet showing more individuality (as a group) and more aesthetic appeal. By the beginning of the 15th century, the term "kastenmaller", meaning printer or maker of playing cards, was an accepted part of the language and German-manufactured cards were being used in Italy and France.

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⁷Arthur M. Hind, A History of Woodcut, (Volume I, London: Constable and Company, 1935), p. 80.

who seemed to have remained independent, are devotional prints, scenes from the life of the Virgin, Christ, and the saints (especially Saint Christopher, who apparently was a favorite), allegories on death and various reminders of mortality. New Year's greeting cards were also printed early, as were numerous prints designed to decorate coffers, trunks, caskets, and the inside covers of missals and booklets. Generally these latter prints seem to be representative of secular life and pleasures, and fables popular at the time. Broadsheets of these subjects spread extensively along the trade routes, and were reproduced in ceaseless variation, employing the same basic composition and subject matter. The earliest prints consisted most often of one or two figures, standing somewhat stiffly against a handcolored background of black or gold. True originality was unusual; the majority of early prints could have come from a single artist, making it difficult to determine the date and origin. Features, head shape, and body stance are usually schematic. The nose is an exaggerated angular line breaking across the plane of the face which is turned slightly to one side or facing squarely the front. The eyes are unusually expressive, heavily lidded and outlined, looking inward rather than out at the viewer. Limbs and particularly fingers are painfully elongated. Little attempt is made to suggest volume, although often a feeling of infinite space is created, as in an early nativity, undated, but presumed to have been cut in the first decades of the century. The folds of the clothing follow the rhythm of the body,

ending, in these early works, in rounded hooks, in contrast to the more angular folds of late decades. The early German artist, as well as his successors, was no respecter of natural form; he compelled the object to his own will, and distorted, at times unmercifully, in order to express subjective emotion, and as a craftsman, to fill the space allotted to him. Little regard is had for time sequence, or realistic appearances; symbols are used to such an extent as to make a number of prints, notably "Saint Christopher and the Christ Child", dated about 1425, appear surrealistic. The primary purpose of these early prints appears to be symbolic, rather than descriptive.

During these decades, there is in almost every print a curious mixture of the material and the spiritual; the material is colored by a moral tone, yet the spiritual is definitely still of the world. There is exhibited, as well, a vibrant love of life, yet a constant preoccupation with death. Many fantastic, even grotesque, turns of the imagination are to be found. In the nativity scene mentioned above, for instance, a fierce little donkey grimaces over the shoulder of an unconscious madonna. In this print, too, is found sensitive variation in the swelling of line, which was later accentuated and finally reduced to effeminacy during the 16th century.

These early prints were cut in broad outline, with almost ascetic simplicity, and were intended primarily as a basis for hand coloring. Energy is spent on vitality of line and movement, rather than on superfluous detail.

The stern and simple conventions of the art are not a sign of poverty of genius or crudity of execution, but of a just estimate of the medium. The very simplicity of these outline cuts gives them much of their noble and expressive quality.⁸

The artists developed a powerful shorthand system of description, and expression of emotion and ideas, which, with variation served artists for over a hundred years, and was revived by early 20th century artists seeking a new means of expression. The early work is schematic, rarely original, executed by anonymous craftsmen, but with few exceptions, is amazingly fresh and vital. After mid-15th century, however, the woodcut began to turn in another direction, less powerful, more concerned with originality, detail and technique.

Part of the reason for this was the discovery, about 1430, that engravings into metal could also be profitably printed and sold. Engravings became relatively popular during the height of the early woodcut, and show decided influence from the earlier graphic. The first engravers are known principally through their initials, place of residence, or by their prints alone. The Master of the Playing Cards, called by Zigrosser an "artist of some power and imagination",⁹ worked in southern Germany between 1430 and 1445. His work shows the sharp angularity that characterized the woodcut, although the features and hands are more refined, and of course, through the nature of the medium, the delineation is more graceful. He stands virtually alone above a collection of mediocre

⁸Hind, p. 220. *ibid.*, Germany, (London: Methuen and Company, Ltd., 1937), p. 335.

⁹Zigrosser, p. 35.

masters, until the Master E.S., who also worked in southern Germany, after 1450. The manner of the Master E.S. mingles "sweetness with navietie",¹⁰ with greater variety in technique and manner of handling the human figure. He experimented with shading, employing a brittle parallel-line method, as well as soft, almost delicate stipple strokes. In his drawing, he varies from stiff stylization to decided attempts at realism, accentuating always the expressive eyes, and faces, and long narrow hands. In his best prints, there is a great deal of vitality and force.

In strongest contrast to the violent passion of Bavarian late 15th century art stands the gentle beauty of Schongauer...¹¹

Martin Schongauer, who worked from 1465 until his death in 1491, was revered in his own time both as a painter and an engraver. He marks the termination of the predominance of medieval influence and the turn of the later German artist from a search for the "ideal of perfect beauty", to a deeper interest in detail and technical achievement. His prints exhibit a deep emotional quality, yet lack the dynamic force of earlier graphics. His work is refined until it radiates delicacy, rather than fierceness, his medieval griffins have been tamed and domesticated, his crucifixion has become more of a fantasy. Nevertheless, many of his prints, such as "The Nativity" and "The Resurrection", executed late in the 15th century, have an

¹⁰Zigrosser, p. 36

¹¹Jethro Bithell, (ed.), Germany, (London: Methuen and Company, Ltd., 1937), p. 335.

extraordinary beauty and the wistfulness of a fairy-tale.

During the second half of the 15th century, the German printmaker began to reach out somewhat timidly toward individuality and much of the force and power of earlier work is eventually lost in a haze of intricate shading, detail, and involved compositions. Although these later artists generally followed the schematic formula of early work, especially in portraying the features, they experimented with more naturalistic form and contours of the figure, and placed greater emphasis on the space around the figures and the suggestion of volume. First attempts to create a quality of a third dimension in the woodcut consisted of boldly cut parallel lines, accentuating folds and occasionally setting the figure in relief before a back panel. This is largely unobtrusive, although somewhat crude, but as the end of the century approached, the artist devised a multitude of shading techniques. The face area was the final portion of the print to be modeled through a shading device, as well as the last to be rendered with attention to realism. Consistent with the changes, there is a great deal of diversity in emotional quality, technical aspects, and subject matter. Some prints, notably, "Die Fabel vom Panther und der Bauern", printed in Ulm in 1476, is still simply cut and strongly linear, with only faint suggestions of shading. However the figure in this print shows the more naturalistic tendency of later prints, and the beast is a fantastic conglomeration of bits and pieces from animals and man, real and imaginary. A still later print,

"Christ and Peter's Wife's Mother", also originating from Ulm, is cut purely in line, although with thinner line, and tangled, unexpected angularity.

Subjects of the late 15th century prints are still basically the same as earlier, with more emphasis on politics, genre, satire, and other secular interests. Artists, other than the most capable, tend to become lost in technique and innovation, producing prints which are decidedly inferior, lacking depth of feeling and conception. These tendencies were magnified during the next century, which, according to Hind, had dignity, but was arid in comparison to the "full blooded youth" of 15th century work.¹²

Personalities ruled the 16th century, with Durer as the foremost artistic personality. It was a century of war, of internal turmoil in religion and economics, of intellectual ferment, a time of confusion and change, a transitional period which destroyed the final remnants of medieval concepts. Under the impact of these controversies, the graphic arts swelled in importance and magnificence, then gradually tumbled into decay. Technical innovations were introduced, notably the etching, used first by Daniel Hopfer and Urs Graf in southern Germany. First known etching, by Hopfer, is a mural-like print of New Testament scenes, strongly executed, with a great deal of line variation. As printing and book-making expanded, engraving replaced the woodcut as the most favored graphic, and the

¹²Hind, p. 43.

woodcut responded with such finely cut line that it is often difficult to distinguish one from the other.

The artist became less of the craftsman, and worked more for the sake of his own expression; he searched keenly for originality. Grien developed a "terrible intensity" of line and composition; Cranach, a "naive sensuality"; Urs Graf, with the new medium of etching, turned back to the early 15th century for inspiration, to traditional use of symbol and emotions; Holbein and Durer turned to intricately detailed compositions, drawn in vibrant, pulsing line.¹³ Landscape, "a natural development of northern art",¹⁴ took form as an individual expression through the work of Hirshvogel, and was an important addition to both religious and secular prints. Earlier conceptions of space were replaced by detailed landscape or interior environment, perspective (often incorrect), and various experiments with lighting. Although the graphic work of the 16th century lacks the vitality of earlier work, it is interesting, if for nothing else, for its technical achievements, and new means of expression. In liberating himself from the schematic formula of earlier work, the 16th century printmaker became caught in the trap of his own originality, innovations and weakness for detail and pomposity.

Little of significance was produced during the next three centuries.

¹³Bithell, pp. 34-40.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 338.

The great men of the German Renaissance were dead... a period of strange and distorted taste was in progress. There is a frenzied angularity about the details of ornament... There were elaborate woodcuts in the Durer tradition, still engraved and sold, and perhaps German art was most successful when it concerned itself with heraldry.¹⁵

Interest was centered in portraits of the nobility and occasional genre scenes, executed in elaborate systems of cross-hatching, and mechanical swelling of line. Hollar, a destitute German noble, who worked in England during the 17th century, produced a number of minute and beautifully executed, at times, poignant, engravings of landscape and figures. He is Germany's sole contribution of note, with the possible exceptions of Johann Georg Dillis, in the next century, who produced disturbing landscapes foreshadowing Van Gogh, and Erhard in the 19th century.

Most important technical innovation of the 18th century was the invention of lithography, or planography, by Alois Senefelder, a Bavarian printer, actor and would-be writer. He invented, and used it as a means of reproduction, not as an art form. The early lithographs are products of the decadent time, and the power of the medium is not realized until much later.

Searching for a unique art form, the group of 20th century German artists, known as the Expressionists, went to the directness and simplicity of African primitives and to the early German graphic work, especially the woodcut. They discovered in the woodcut "heavy

¹⁵S. Sitwell, German Baroque Art, (New York: George H. Doran and Company, 1928), p. 14.

direct, crude qualities (which) served well to reinforce their powerful black statements."¹⁶ They became a group apart, who protested violently and bitterly against every aspect of life, slicing black tortured lines across their prints, deeply subjective, and often twisted.

These works have little grace, little humor, little subtlety. There is only violence undirected and protest unqualified. The beautiful goddess of the Renaissance is gone... The thing which replaces her is an ugly sorrowing, protesting animal.¹⁷

There is slight evidence that the "beautiful goddess of the Renaissance" had ever made a significant impact on German art; these men, more violent perhaps, are emotionally, as well as physically related to the early German printmaker. They continued the tradition of linear expression, and recaptured finally, the feeling for the natural capacity of the wood, which in Germany had become almost hopelessly lost. The lithographs, etchings and occasional engraving produced by the group are no less striking linear statements, "rendered with immediacy, economy and power."¹⁸

Through their prints, as well as in their paintings, the German Expressionists sought to lay bare the soul, to penetrate to its essence, to an underlying idea which they believed must exist. Both their portraits and landscapes are psychological studies,

¹⁶....., "German Expressionism", Art Digest, 23:20, December 1, 1948.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁸....., "Expressionistic Prints", Art News, 53:56, October 1, 1954.

ruthless, bitter and sardonic, showing no mercy, attempting, it seems, to obliterate reality as they saw it, and erect a new reality.

Trees writhe in horrid spasm, ejected from a soil rent as in travail, the ears of corn hang heavy with ripeness, we feel the generation of things.¹⁹

These symbols, vital as they were, also slipped away, devoid of meaning to people who found new interests, and began to hide and disguise the violence beneath prettier clothing.

Compared to the early 20th century, the contemporary graphic artist lives in a broader world, that is different in contemporary prints, but not in a deeper way; he feels his fear, he suffers, and in protest he conjures up strange worlds from the hinterland of his imagination. There are the worlds of August Gonsky's tower of divergent shapes in "Civitate Vecchia", of John Ingham's floating images caught between veils of subtle color, of Maria Jurek's dark eyes staring uncomprehendingly at a dream-like tight-rope. Each is different; each artist must find his own. He does not have the schematic pattern of the early German, or even the symbolism of the German Expressionist; these

¹⁹Bitshell, p. 347.

IV

It is, I believe, treading on dangerous territory to attempt to sum up the characteristics of any age or period of time. But any person, bringing to art his own experience, leaves, if he is at all receptive, with his own impressions. These are remembered impressions, of Occidental contemporary prints viewed during the last several years and those studied more carefully in recent months. These are ideas which were considered concerning the relationship that may or may not exist between the contemporary prints, and those of the German produced especially in the 15th and 16th centuries and the early 20th century. Being wound in the same circle of time as these contemporary artists, it is difficult to be objective; these, however, are the most vivid impressions.

Compared to the early German, the contemporary graphic artist lives in a broader world, that is evident in contemporary prints, but not in a deeper one; he too, has fear, he suffers, and is prone to conjure up strange worlds from the wanderings of his imagination. These are the worlds of Edmond Caserella's tower of divergent shapes in "Civita Vecchio", of Adja Yunker's fleeing images caught between veils of subtle color, of Mario Avati's dark eyes staring uncomprehendingly at a dream-like tight-ropeist. Each is different; each artist must find his own. He does not have the schematic pattern of the early German, or even the symbolism of the German Expressionist; these are no longer valid, he must find another. In this contemporary:

Brooklyn Museum, 1930, p. 5.

world, the artist has joy, as well as fear and is able to express it in subtle lyricism; unlike the earlier Germans, when he laughs, it is happy, not ironical; when he cries, it is sad, not bitter. Nevertheless, the basic optimism and sureness of early German work is absent. The print today lacks matter-of-factness; it takes nothing for granted, questions every fact and suggestion, every physical and moral structure, questioning harshly or softly, depending on the artist, but never ceasing to question. These prints seem always ready to leap away instantly in unknown directions. They contain the dynamics and speed of the 20th century rather than of the fifteenth; they hold sparks of its tension and conflicts, and shadows of its preoccupations and uncertainties. Beneath the outer glaze of almost every print, there is a sense of unrest, of conflict, in some, an emptiness. There is found in contemporary prints, the unquietness of which Gummere speaks in association with early German work, the perpetual movement, the searching.

... it is evident from even a casual survey... that the artist is a true and complete contemporary. The art which he has created, like the life he springs from is not peaceful and orderly. But it is tremendously varied, it is genuinely experimental, it has realized quite frankly that symbols which were created in the past to express ideas and beliefs which were once current are no longer adequate for our time.²⁰

Like his German predecessors, the contemporary graphic artist has adopted, either consciously or unconsciously, a sense of timeless

²⁰Allen S. Weller, Ten Years of American Prints, (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1956), p. 6.

space, a spacelessness, unbounded by margins or depth. He has created this through deep endless blacks which seem to pierce to infinity, as those in Michel Ciry's "Marriage Mystique"; through the intense whites of Lee Chesney's etchings, which rupture the serene velvet blacks; or through the linear form, such as the swirling construction of Dick Swift's "Veneration of the Ancestors", catching and holding the viewer in an elipse of voidness.

Technically the contemporary seems to have tried almost everything at least once. He has experimented constantly and profusely, creating, sometimes, masterpieces; sometimes, technical curiosities. He has mixed together every printing medium, founded new mediums and discovered new materials. He has not hesitated to use machines, household tools, plaster, stone, any convenient article as means to his goal. In this experimenting, too, there is a precedent in early German work, which besides employing basic techniques, even mixing them occasionally, produced such varieties as tinsel or quartz prints, flock prints, paste prints, and dotted prints.

No individual, or group of contemporary printmakers have evolved directly from the early German, or even from the Expressionists, yet all have evidently been exposed to both, and have absorbed many of the basic qualities and directions of thought. The contemporary artist has formed an emotional alliance with the fierce beauty of

German form, rather than with the calm serenity of the classic form. The finest of both contemporary and early German prints are essentially linear, restless and often deeply subjective expressions of emotion and ideas.

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