

Visions and Revisions, February 15, 2019-August 4, 2019

Whether breaking with tradition or building on its foundation—challenging or celebrating—artists have always used the work of their predecessors as a point of departure for original expression. Printmakers in particular have been keenly aware of the history of their medium, constantly pursuing innovation while also reviving old techniques to produce new work. To create these results, printmakers often need to overcome considerable technical challenges. The print on this wall was produced from a single copper plate using some of the techniques explored in this exhibition, demonstrating the distinct visual effects they each produce.

Sometimes a technique becomes directly linked to its most famous practitioner, such as etching and Rembrandt or Goya and aquatint. Reference to these artists becomes virtually inescapable, almost embedded in the medium itself. The act of working in a traditional technique, then, provides a way for artists to confront the history of art and their place in it; to question originality, identity, and influence; and to reflect on time, distance, memory, and loss—issues at the core of art-making itself.

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CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Engraving

Engraving is perhaps the most technically demanding of all the printmaking techniques. A burin, a sharp-edged metal tool, is pushed through a copper plate to make grooves, then the plate is inked and printed onto paper. The process requires a delicate balance between physical strength and meticulous precision, creating sharp, highly legible marks and rich images that rely almost exclusively on lines to create tone, texture, and volume.

Developed in Europe in the mid-1400s, engraving was the most revered technique before falling out of favor in the late 1800s. Few artists are proficient in this method today.

Lucas van Leyden, Netherlandish, ca. 1494-1533
Ornament with Two Sphinxes and a Winged Man, 1528
Engraving on laid paper
Museum purchase: Gift of Murray S. Danforth, Jr. 50.324



Claude Mellan, French, 1598-1688

Death of Adonis, 1636-1662

Engraving on laid paper

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 46.351



Distraught, Venus hurries to her dying lover, Adonis. He ignored her warnings about the dangers of the hunt and has been gored by a wild boar. In the background, cupids take vengeance on the animal.

This print of Mellan's own design is a typical example of the artist's unusual technique. Avoiding crosshatching almost entirely, he relied instead on the careful placement of parallel strokes. Tone, texture, and volume are conveyed by modulating the thickness and spacing of lines. Outlines and stippling are used sparingly. After studying in Rome Mellan became an established figure in the French school of engraving. Few artists, however, attempted to emulate his technique, which was perhaps too individualized to be easily taught.

Andrew Raftery, American, b.1962, (RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)

Scene One, Living Room, from the series *Open House*, 2008

Engraving on Twinrocker laid paper

Gift of Andrew Raftery in honor of Norberto Massi 2008.109.1



As light streams into a well-appointed interior, a realtor kneels to hand information sheets to two prospective buyers. Behind him, another couple walks in the front door for the openhouse viewing.

To depict this contemporary American middle-class ritual, Raftery looked to engravings from the 1600s, and in particular to the rigorous technique of Claude Mellan. Raftery creates a convincing illusion of space, light, and surface texture through the use of parallel lines of different length, width, direction, and spacing. At once realistically detailed and artfully constructed, the image takes on an uncanny quality, reinforced by the combination of old technique and contemporary subject matter.

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William E. C. Morgan, English, 1903-1979

The Source, ca. 1927

Engraving on Van GelderZonen laid paper

Museum purchase: gift of Ambassador J. W. Middendorf II and Frances Middendorf 2018.100

This print depicts a mysterious nude woman standing at the mouth of a stream. Her pose and modeling suggest figures in early Italian engravings, while the detailed landscape around her alludes to the work of Albrecht Dürer, synthesizing two different European traditions of engraving on copper.

While Morgan achieved early success, his career as an engraver did not last long. Failing eyesight forced him to abandon printmaking in 1938.



Albrecht Dürer, German, 1471-1528

Nemesis, ca. 1501-1502

Engraving on laid paper

Museum Membership Fund 65.032

This engraving depicts the goddess of retribution, a bridle in one hand for restraining the wicked and a goblet in the other for rewarding the just. She exercises her unpredictable power over the world, symbolized by the sphere on which she balances and the landscape under the cloud pulled back like a veil. Dürer's exquisite use of detail identifies the town as Chiusa, in northern Italy.

The stark division between the allegorical content at the top and the dense description of the landscape in the lower part is unusual, yet the print is no less coherent for it. Dürer brought the precise craftsmanship of the goldsmith to the task of pictorial composition, with Nemesis influencing generations of printmakers that followed him.



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Robert Austin, British, 1895-1973

A Woman Praying, 1928

Engraving on laid paper

Bequest of Dr. Charles H. MacDonald 60.085.5

This engraving is one of many images Robert Austin made of men and women praying. He would have witnessed similar religious practice during his travels in Italy in the 1920s. Like the 15th-century artist Martin Schongauer—whom he admired, and on whose monogram he modeled his own—Austin used a system of outlines, dots, and crosshatching, but here the effect is quite different. The decorative quality of Schongauer's print is completely absent in Austin's brooding, more three-dimensional image. The woman depicted here seems to inhabit a convincing physical space as well as a state of mind.



Martin Schongauer, German, ca. 1430-1491

The Entombment, ca. 1480

Engraving, trimmed within platemark

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 32.185

This elegant composition depicts the moment Jesus's body was laid to rest after his crucifixion. Schongauer combined fluid outlines, tiny dots, fine parallel lines, and limited crosshatching to create an image that is at once decorative, moving, and arresting in its apparent simplicity. The blank areas emphasize the sober, stark atmosphere of the event.



Schongauer, who consistently signed his work with his initials, was one of the first artists to take up and perfect the technique of engraving in the late 1400s. The young Albrecht Dürer (wall at right) sought to become Schongauer's apprentice, but Schongauer died shortly before Dürer reached his hometown of Colmar.

James S. Gill, American, 1844-1900

Lucas van Leyden, Netherlandish, ca. 1494-1533

Pasquale Masiello, American, 1912-1987

Ornament with Two Sphinxes and a Winged Man, 1879

Engraving on medium weight wove paper

Gift of Arthur Gill 51.089



Here two monstrous hybrid creatures stand on each side of a seated winged man. This small composition is an ornament design, inspired by ancient Roman painted decorations known as grotesques. Working

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on a small scale, Netherlandish artist Lucas van Leyden creates a vivid sense of relief by setting his figures against a dark background built up from a dense grid of engraved lines.

Inspired by Italian prints and works by Albrecht Dürer, Lucas was the first Dutch artist to become famous for his engravings, among the most refined early achievements in the technique. Lucas's plates were often reprinted and copied in later centuries. In 1879, the engraver James S. Gill made a faithful, though reversed, copy of the print.

Mezzotint

While engraving relies on line to create images, mezzotint uses tone. Instead of adding black marks to a white surface, mezzotinters work from dark to light by polishing, or burnishing, highlights onto the copper plate. Before burnishing, the surface of the plate is distressed with tools to create a pitted texture that will hold ink and print intense, velvety blacks.

Mezzotint is ideal for making images with strong tonal contrasts or for translating images painted in oil into prints. Devised in the 1640s in Holland, the technique was introduced in the 1660s to England, where it was refined over the following century—the reason why mezzotint was often called “the English manner.”

Carol Wax, American, b. 1953

Jennifer Melby, American, b. 1946

Singer II, 1985

Mezzotint on off-white wove German etching paper

Jesse Metcalf Fund 1999.34.1

This dramatically lit image of an old-fashioned sewing machine has the intensity of a portrait, a popular subject for mezzotints. The print's lighting and attention to surface also reveal the influence of Dutch still-life and Baroque paintings. “To me, ordinary objects seem extraordinary,” writes Wax, whose evocative depictions of discarded things fulfill her stated aim to “infuse the inanimate with anima.”

Through her choice of subject matter and her adoption of a traditional, time-consuming technique, the artist critiques the consumerist cycle of our wasteful society, where mass-produced machines are swiftly relegated to obsolescence.



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Katsunori Hamanishi, Japanese, b. 1949

Connections, Variation North, 1980

Mezzotint on wove paper

Gift from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Barnet Fain 2001.80.105

In his early prints, Hamanishi created quietly suspenseful compositions out of twigs, branches, rice stalks, ropes, and knots, all thrown into vivid three-dimensional relief by their sharp tonal contrasts. Sculptural and meditative, these minimalist compositions opened up mezzotint to the genre of still life.



Since the mid-1900s, Japan has been an important center for the revival of mezzotint. Japanese artists have drawn from both European and local printmaking traditions while pushing ahead with technical innovations, including the development of mechanical rocking machines to prepare larger plates. Hamanishi claims to have adopted mezzotint as a more environmentally friendly technique than aquatint, which uses toxic acids to achieve similar results.

Richard Earlom, British, 1743-1822

Joseph Wright, English, 1734-1797

The Forge, published 1773

Mezzotint with burnishing on medium weight cream laid paper

Museum Works of Art Fund 52.309

In mezzotint, Richard Earlom found the perfect medium for translating Joseph Wright of Derby's dramatically tonal paintings into black and white prints. While the light and shadow harks back to the strong chiaroscuro effects of 17th-century painting, the subject seems to anticipate the modern age. At the center of the composition, a blacksmith holds a piece of white-hot iron beneath a water-powered hammer. Britain played important roles both in the Industrial Revolution and the development of mezzotint, making this image well suited to the medium in more than one sense.



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Reynold Weidenaar, American, 1915-1985

Self-1950, 1950

Mezzotint on wove paper

Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.536

In this self-portrait, the artist confidently confronts the viewer's gaze. He holds in his hand a rocker and a scraper—the mezzotinter's tools. Weidenaar placed his likeness against a landscape dominated by an erupting volcano, making the print mysterious and strangely timeless. Traveling to Mexico in 1944, the artist sketched the eruption of Parícutin. An image he made of the volcano in 1945 was his first successful mezzotint, quoted in this formal self-portrait executed on his election to the National Academy of Design.



Largely self-taught, Weidenaar was a superb technician. He researched earlier tool designs and employed custom-made or modified rockers to create the rich grounds in his prints.

Frederick Mershimer, American, b. 1958

42nd Street, 1997

Mezzotint on wove paper

Gift of Earl Retif and Ann Salzer in memory of Sylvan Cole 2005.108.2

"I wanted to capture the seedy quality of 42nd Street before Disney moved into the neighborhood. Many of the theaters were boarded up or had turned to porn, and the retail shops were not of the highest quality." —Frederick Mershimer



Inspired by American prints from the early 1900s and by black and white movies, Mershimer employs mezzotint to create vivid depictions of modern-day New York City. In scale and ambition, this print is comparable to Earlom's work (left), but instead of white-hot iron, here neon lights pierce the darkness. Dominated by buildings, Mershimer's images—like Earlom's—are rich in enigma and atmosphere. "Ultimately," the artist states, "the subject is the mood."

Etching and Rembrandt

Practiced by metalsmiths since antiquity, etching was first used to make prints around 1495 in southern Germany. Lines are scratched onto a coated copper plate with an etching needle, then the plate is exposed to acid, creating grooves that will hold the ink. Drypoint lines can be scratched directly into the metal to produce rich, velvety marks. Etching most closely approaches the immediacy and freedom of drawing in pen, making it a popular choice for artists without printmaking training.

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Working in Amsterdam in the early 1600s, Rembrandt van Rijn employed a combination of etching and drypoint to produce a large and varied body of prints: sketchy but animated landscapes, strongly tonal compositions, and engaging portraits of people and imagined characters. Rembrandt expanded the visual effects of his prints by varying the inking and wiping of his plates and by printing on unusual surfaces such as parchment and newly available Asian papers.

Wildly popular in the mid-1700s, Rembrandt was a key inspiration to the European artists who revived original etching in the mid-1800s. His impact remains undiminished today.

Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606-1669

The Three Trees, 1643

Etching, engraving, and drypoint on laid paper

Brown University; David Winton Bell Gallery Collection

To create this brooding landscape, Rembrandt combined etching, engraving, and drypoint, perhaps using an additional technique in the foreground. Humans, their activities, and their cities are but half-hidden details, while the raw beauty of nature takes center stage. Highly unusual for Rembrandt, this dramatic and melancholy depiction of gathering clouds and the sun's rays breaking through them was created a year after the death of his beloved first wife.

Between 1750 and 1850, a veritable craze for Rembrandt's works led to dozens of imitations and copies of this most coveted print. Some versions, such as Bretherton's, were so deceptive that they escaped detection until recent times.

Pat Steir, American, b. 1938

Self After Rembrandt #2, 1987

Etching and drypoint on Rives wove paper

Courtesy of Pat Steir

In this sketchy, powerful self-portrait, energetic marks of the etching needle are overlaid with thicker lines scratched directly into the plate in drypoint. As the title declares, Steir responded to printed portraits by Rembrandt, using his style and techniques to distort her own features.

The print merges Steir's interest in the self and its place in history. While living in Amsterdam she became interested in the work of Dutch masters, but she has also explored her identity by depicting herself in the style of Dürer, Goya, and Picasso. Steir likens this process to an art historian's work or to the experience of a pianist expressing herself through the music of others.

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Johan Barthold Jongkind, Dutch, 1819-1891

Mill in Holland (Moulin en Hollande), 1867

Etching on medium weight cream laid paper watermarked HUDELIST
Museum purchase: gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 53.324

This lively etching of windmills along a canal near Rotterdam has the freshness and spontaneity of a sketch made on the spot—qualities Jongkind's contemporaries, including the pre-Impressionist painters, greatly admired. Hailed by French painter Édouard Manet as the "father of modern landscape," Jongkind was also clearly indebted to Rembrandt's approach to the depiction of nature. As a Dutch artist working in etching, Jongkind could not escape Rembrandt's influence, particularly when confronting subjects Rembrandt had made famous.

This impression was signed and dedicated to a friend by Jongkind.



Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606-1669

Old Bearded Man in High Fur Cap, ca. 1635

Etching

Museum Collection INV2006.215.2

Around 1635, Rembrandt executed a small group of prints of men dressed in attire that Dutch audiences would have considered exotic. Four of these prints, the "oriental heads," were based directly on prints by Rembrandt's friend Jan Lievens, while this example has a looser relationship with Lievens's models. This bearded man with a tall fur cap and eyes closed hovers indistinctly between an imagined Biblical patriarch and a contemporary portrait of a man wearing "oriental" or Middle Eastern dress, some examples of which Rembrandt may have seen in Amsterdam.



Though Rembrandt was praised as a highly original printmaker, his etchings were frequently influenced by the work of his contemporaries, such as Lievens, and by earlier Renaissance masters such as Albrecht Dürer and Andrea Mantegna, whose prints he collected.

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Glenn Brown, British, b. 1966
Paragon Press, English
Half-Life (after Rembrandt), Plate 4, 2017
Etching on Velin Arches paper
Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2018.98

“Rembrandt is very important, fundamental, to my work”
—Glenn Brown

Behind this intricate mesh of bold marks are the outlines of Rembrandt’s series of male heads in exotic garb. Brown superimposes, manipulates, and deforms those images to create his own work, inviting associations with the layered quality of time and the distorting effects of memory.

The print’s ambiguous relation to history is embedded in its creation. Brown stacks digital images of Rembrandt’s heads, alters them with Photoshop, and draws on them using an iPad. The resulting digital file is then photomechanically transferred to a copper plate and printed like a traditional etching.



Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606-1669
View of Amsterdam from the Kadijk, ca. 1641
Etching on paper
Gift of Mr. Henry D. Sharpe 48.356

Windmills, steeples, and ship masts bristle along a flat low horizon. Tiny human figures dot the middle ground, while the foreground is taken up by turf and canals. The artist’s graphic marks occupy about a third of this sheet, which is otherwise left conspicuously—almost gapingly—blank. Working rapidly on a small scale, Rembrandt depicts a recognizable view of Amsterdam as seen from the surrounding countryside. The sketchy treatment and economical mark-making in Rembrandt’s landscapes have been widely admired by later artists.



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Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606-1669
Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, 1654
Etching and drypoint on laid paper
Gift of Mr. Henry D. Sharpe 49.078

A bright light pierces the deep shadows of night to reveal this dramatic, poignant scene. The dead body of Jesus, his foot still gruesomely nailed to the cross, is hoisted down by a group of followers. As one crowd member lifts his arms to receive the weight of the corpse, his hand catches the torchlight, puncturing the darkness.



Rembrandt was a master of chiaroscuro, or “dark manner” prints. He used lines and drypoint to build up areas of rich, velvety blacks from which partially lit figures emerge, creating a heightened atmosphere of mystery and drama.

Ferdinand Bol, Dutch, 1616-1680
The Family, 1643
Etching and engraving on laid paper
Museum purchase: Gift of Miss Ellen D. Sharpe 50.367

A new mother sits in front of a window nursing her baby while her husband holds up a coverlet. Light streams in the large-paned window to highlight this intimate connection at the center, while the outlines of the room emerge faintly out of the shadows.



At the age of 20, Bol moved to Amsterdam to study with Rembrandt. The influence of the teacher on his pupil is evident in this etching, which Bol executed a year after starting his own studio. Here Bol was particularly inspired by the “dark manner” etchings Rembrandt first devised.

Christian Wilhelm Ernst Dietrich, German, 1712-1774
Adoration of the Shepherds, 1730-1760
Etching and drypoint on lightweight cream laid paper
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 49.007

“I am the light of the world,” Jesus said to his apostles—a metaphor that generations of artists endeavored to visualize, particularly in depictions of his birth. In this arresting image, Dietrich, a court artist in Dresden, uses Rembrandt’s “dark manner”—and its basic tools of etching and drypoint—to achieve harmony between technique and subject matter.



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A gifted imitator, Dietrich never developed a style of his own, but produced works in the manner of several older Italian and Dutch artists. Dietrich's engagement with Rembrandt was profound, leading him to assemble his own collection of prints by the artist. This print, produced at the height of the Rembrandt mania of the 1700s, is one of Dietrich's masterpieces.

James McBey, Scottish, 1883-1959

Night in Ely Cathedral, 1915

Etching on Honig laid paper

Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.680

McBey's cathedral interior at night is full of foreboding. While the single light source valiantly pushes back against impending darkness, it fails to illuminate the foreground where we, as viewers, enter the scene. In its dramatization of the effects of light and shadow, this depiction is clearly indebted to Rembrandt, but it offers more than imitation. Unlike many of Rembrandt's prints, which often use drypoint, McBey's image relies entirely upon the etched line, making this work a startling demonstration of what can be accomplished using this single technique.



James Bretherton, British, fl. 1770-1799

Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606-1669

The Three Trees, ca. 1770

Etching, drypoint, and engraving on laid paper

Bequest of Sally Jean Marks 2018.59

To create this brooding landscape, Rembrandt combined etching, engraving, and drypoint, perhaps using an additional technique in the foreground. Humans, their activities, and their cities are but half-hidden details, while the raw beauty of nature takes center stage. Highly unusual for Rembrandt, this dramatic and melancholy depiction of gathering clouds and the sun's rays breaking through them was created a year after the death of his beloved first wife.



Between 1750 and 1850, a veritable craze for Rembrandt's works led to dozens of imitations and copies of this most coveted print. Some versions, such as Bretherton's, were so deceptive that they escaped detection until recent times.

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Frank Brangwyn, British, 1867-1956

Windmill, Dixmuden, 1908

Etching on zinc plate with roulette, open bite, and plate tone on wove paper

Gift in the name of Walter Callender by his son, Walter R. Callender
29.113



A large windmill set against a darkening sky dominates this image of a farmer gathering his herd before a storm. Starting from a sketch of a real mill in the Belgian town of Dixmude, Brangwyn enlarges the typical Rembrandtian landscape to an unprecedented scale, replacing harmonious country views with a more ominous vision of the disquieting power of nature. Using large zinc plates, strong nitrous acid, thick inks, and selective wiping, Brangwyn developed a bold technique ideally suited to his aesthetic goals.

Born in Belgium to Welsh parents, Brangwyn received no formal artistic education but worked with success in a variety of media. Although he claimed that art schools “only produce a lot of clever imitators,” his own style was inspired by a number of earlier artists, including Rembrandt.

Aquatint and Goya

Aquatint is a technique for etching tone. Unlike mezzotint, aquatint does not require physical force to prepare the plate. In the most common process, a minuscule network of lines is bitten by acid around a coating of fine grains of resin scattered on the plate. When inked, these areas print a veil of tone that varies in depth and saturation depending on the different size of grains and the length of exposure to the acid. The final effect resembles an ink wash applied with a brush.

First developed in Holland in the mid-1600s, aquatint was hardly ever used before its revival in the 1750s, mostly in France and England. Aquatint eventually became associated with the Spanish painter Francisco Goya, who, beginning in the 1790s, produced four series of prints that are widely considered to be masterpieces in the medium. Later artists admired Goya's prints for their technical experimentation, their strong visual impact, and their haunting and often violent imagery. Unsurprisingly, Goya's combination of etching and aquatint became a favorite tool for exploring mysterious, dark, or dreamlike subjects.

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Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes, Spanish, 1746-1828
Real Academia de Nobles Artes de San Fernando
The Men in Sacks (Los ensacados), The Proverbs (Los Proverbios),
1816-1824, printed 1864
Etching and aquatint on J. G. O. wove paper
Museum Works of Art Fund 49.457.8



Against a black sky, a strong light throws a group of figures into relief. Their bodies are enclosed in sacks, their heads sticking out of the fastened openings. Who are they, and what are they doing? Some explanations have been attempted—including the observation that if we cover up clothing, social differences become invisible—but Goya's meaning remains ambiguous. Mysterious atmosphere, unclear meaning, and bold effects of light are typical of Goya's work in aquatint.

Goya began his printmaking practice by copying works by Tiepolo and Velázquez. He was also profoundly influenced by the “dark manner” prints Rembrandt made nearly a century earlier, and referred to the artist as his teacher.

Enrique Chagoya, Mexican, b. 1953
The Men in Sacks (Los ensacados), 2003
Etching, aquatint, and red stamping on wove paper
Gift of the Printmaking Department, Rhode Island School of Design
2004.19.2



This aquatint is a near copy of the print to the left. The bulbous shape in the sky is a nuclear mushroom cloud—an addition that brings modern-day fears to Goya's timeless image. The red stamp featuring cartoonish mushrooms is a humorous counterpoint to the bleak implications of the print.

Chagoya has made more than 30 prints after Goya, often inserting a modern element into the older images. Both artists engage with themes of greed, injustice, and the ravages of war; it is merely the contingent circumstances that change. Chagoya has described replicating these images as a kind of “communication with Goya's ghost.” At the same time, as a Mexican artist incorporating the imagery of a Spanish predecessor, Chagoya purposely reverses the historic direction of colonial appropriation.

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Käthe Kollwitz, German, 1867-1945
Verlag Otto Felsing, German, after 1875
Emil Richter, German, active 1848-1930
Self-portrait at a Table, ca.1893, published 1921
Etching, drypoint, aquatint, and spit bite on medium-weight
wove paper
Anonymous gift 2005.142.39

Illuminated by an overhead gas light, the artist turns to stare beyond the viewer. The space around her is swallowed up by densely textured darkness, achieved through an energetic combination of aquatint and spit bite (the application of acid on an uncoated plate).

Greatly inspired by the work of Max Klinger, Kollwitz created an experimental body of prints focusing on the themes of war, death, the suffering of working people, motherhood, and identity. She frequently returned to intimate self-portraits, allowing her face and hands to convey mood and expression.



Paula Rego, British, b. 1935
Marlborough Graphics
Wendy Sewing on Peter's Shadow, 1992
Etching and aquatint on Somerset textured paper
Gift of Cindy and Scott Burns 2000.111.2

In J. M. Barrie's famous story, Peter Pan loses his shadow and is only reunited with it when his friend Wendy offers to sew it back on. That innocent episode is here reimaged by Rego in an ominous, erotically charged setting. On top of an open wardrobe—a site of childhood fears—reclines a nude woman, while on the back wall stuffed toys cast disquieting shadows.



Aquatint, a technique of light and shadows, is perfectly suited to depicting this episode, part of a portfolio of illustrations to Peter Pan. Rego, like Goya and Klinger, tends to produce prints in series using their same techniques, and also shares their interest in mystery, sexuality, and the darker sides of the human psyche.

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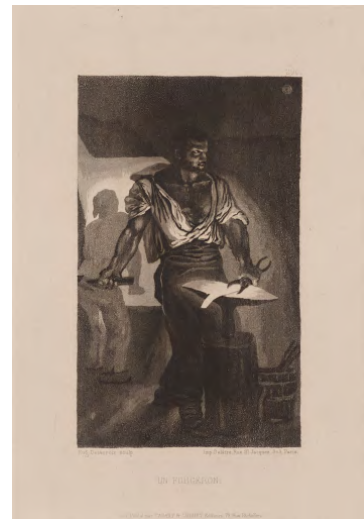
Max Klinger, German, b. 1857; d. 1920
 Amsler and Ruthardt
The Swan Prince (Der Schwanenprinz), Plate 7, 1915
 Etching and aquatint on wove paper
 Mary B. Jackson Fund 2002.74.1.7

Under a mottled sky near a large body of water, a nude woman flees the lustful pursuit of a monstrous creature who is half man, half swan. This disturbing scene is an episode in a series of prints that form a loose, dreamlike narrative. Deeply influenced by Goya's use of etching and aquatint, Klinger was also drawn to Goya's eerily surreal subjects, and adopted his custom of working in series, or "cycles," to use Klinger's term. Klinger's unsettling aquatints, admired by artists including Käthe Kollwitz, lay bare his preoccupation with sexuality, love, death, and gender conflict, reflecting his conviction that prints should show the "dark side of life."



Eugène Delacroix, French, 1798-1863
 Auguste Delâtre, French, 1822-1907
 A. Cadart & Luquet, French
A Blacksmith (Un Forgeron), from Eugene Delacroix's Unique Etched Work (Oeuvre Unique À L'Eau-Forte d'Eugène Delacroix), 1833,
 printed 1865
 Aquatint on chine collé
 Museum purchases: Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 50.104

The glow of hot iron emphasizes the muscular body of a blacksmith about to strike a blow with his hammer. Behind him, another worker is almost engulfed in the bright light of the forge. This shadowy subject was most appropriate for Delacroix's exploration of aquatint, a medium of light and dark. Its dramatic tonal effects recall Goya's *Caprichos*, some of which, like this print, were executed in virtually pure aquatint, with little or no linework. The subject and mood also echo Earlom's mezzotint exhibited in the next gallery. This, Delacroix's most successful aquatint, was published in 1865, when a renewed interest in etching was at its height.



Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes, Spanish, 1746-1828
 Real Academia de Nobles Artes de San Fernando
A Way of Flying (Modo de volar) / Where There's a Will, There's a Way (Donde hay ganas hay maña), The Proverbs (Los Proverbios),
 1816-1824, printed 1864
 Etching, aquatint, and drypoint on J. G. O. wove paper
 Museum Works of Art Fund 49.457.13



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A group of men with large artificial wings and bird-head hats flit about like giant moths in the darkness. Goya's original title (*A Way of Flying*) provides no clues for interpreting this image. Even within Goya's haunting, enigmatic oeuvre, *The Proverbs* are among his strangest prints. The artist began working on the series at the age of 70 and continued until 1824, four years before his death, perhaps leaving it incomplete. Published posthumously, these works greatly affected artists working in etching in the later 1800s.

Kara Walker, American, b. 1969, (RISD MFA 1994, Printmaking)
Landfall Press, Inc.
Vanishing Act, 1997
Etching and aquatint on chine-collé
Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2018.18

Crouching on a theater stage in front of a shadowy audience, a black woman in 19th-century dress devours a little white girl. This shocking scene can be seen as a reversal of the appropriation of black bodies by white oppressors in spectacles such as blackface minstrelsy. At the same time, Walker has described cannibalism as a sensual mixture of love and hate, pointing to interpretations of it as a symbol of the complex psychological interconnections between the exploiter and the exploited. Violent and ambiguous, the print echoes the darkest images by Goya, which Walker studied while preparing this work.



Color Aquatint

Aquatint, a technique that allows the etching of areas of tone, can be used to make prints that approach the visual qualities of pen and wash drawings and watercolors. Marks etched in aquatint appear very fluid, and when combined with tinted inks, the resemblance to wet brushwork can be uncanny.

By the 1770s, printmakers were using multiple copper plates for a single composition, inking them with different colors and printing them successively in perfect registration to emulate the subtlest watercolors or richly chromatic oil paintings. After a period of experimentation and expansion in the late 1700s, the use of color aquatint waned. It was revived in the late 1800s, particularly in France, where the popularity of Japanese woodcuts—with their use of multiple blocks and flat areas of color—inspired artists to embrace color in their own printmaking.

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Jean Claude Richard de Saint-Non

Jean-Honoré Fragonard, French, 1732-1806

Nicolas Poussin, French, 1594-1665

The Massacre of the Innocents (Fragments choisis dans les Peintures et les Tableaux les plus intéressants des Palais et des Églises de l'Italie), 1771; Etching and aquatint on laid paper

Museum Collection INV2006.112.1



In their etched outlines and fluid areas printed in warm gray-black, these prints closely resemble the pen and wash drawings on which they were based. Saint-Non, a collector and amateur artist, traveled to Italy in the company of young artists who made sketches of the works of art they saw, including these two paintings by Poussin, which were then in Roman collections. Upon his return to France, wishing to publish the drawings he had assembled, Saint-Non produced some of the earliest French aquatints, beginning in 1765. The technique was valuable to him because, in his words, it could easily “imitate wash drawings made with China ink.” Saint-Non did not divulge the secret of his process, which is still not fully understood.

Katja Oxman, American, b. Germany, b. 1942

An Open Window, 1992

Color etching and aquatint on wove paper

Anonymous gift 2016.42

A group of objects is arranged on an Islamic rug. Works of Asian art—a bowl, a coin, a reproduction of a Japanese screen—mix with postcards of Western works by Albrecht Dürer and Mark Rothko and with feathers, stamps, and an admission button from the Metropolitan Museum. This print is a meditation on the history of art.



Concerned with color relationships and arrangement, Oxman composes what she calls visual poems, which, while evocative, have no particular meaning. Pushing color aquatint to new levels of complexity, she created this image by printing three plates in registration: dark blue, red, and yellow. No black ink was used. The range of hues is the result of the blending of the three inks in different degrees of saturation.

RISD MUSEUM

Jean Claude Richard de Saint-Non

Jean Robert Ango, French, 1759-1772

Nicolas Poussin, French, 1594-1665

The Children's Bacchanal (Fragments choisis dans les Peintures et les Tableaux les plus intéressants des Palais et des Églises de l'Italie), 1772; Etching and aquatint on laid paper

Museum Collection INV2006.112.34



In their etched outlines and fluid areas printed in warm gray-black, these prints closely resemble the pen and wash drawings on which they were based. Saint-Non, a collector and amateur artist, traveled to Italy in the company of young artists who made sketches of the works of art they saw, including these two paintings by Poussin, which were then in Roman collections. Upon his return to France, wishing to publish the drawings he had assembled, Saint-Non produced some of the earliest French aquatints, beginning in 1765. The technique was valuable to him because, in his words, it could easily “imitate wash drawings made with China ink.” Saint-Non did not divulge the secret of his process, which is still not fully understood.

Claude Jean Baptiste Hoin, French, 1750-1817

Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Italian, 1696-1770

Jean-Honoré Fragonard, French, 1732-1806

Death of a Capuchin Friar, 1796-1797

Aquatint on heavy laid paper

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 66.091



This luminous image, composed of tones of different intensities, uses minimal outlining. Deceptively simple, the tonal range was carefully modulated by selectively covering areas of the plate and repeatedly exposing it to acid for different lengths of time. The use of sepia-colored ink enhances the warm glow of the impression as well as its resemblance to a pen-and-wash drawing.

While the print's inscription claims it is after Fragonard, the composition is based on a brown-wash drawing by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, now at the British Museum. Fragonard may have drawn a copy of Tiepolo's work when he visited Venice. His copy was auctioned in 1775 after the death of the collector Pierre-Jean Mariette, then may have been acquired by Hoin.

RISD MUSEUM

Johann Gottlieb Prestel, German, 1739-1808

Adriaen van der Werff, Dutch, 1659-1722

The Dismissal of Hagar, ca. 1770-1790

Color aquatint on wove paper

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 1997.68

According to the Bible, Hagar, the handmaid of Abraham's wife, Sarah, bore Abraham's first son, Ishmael. When Sarah gave birth to her own son, she convinced Abraham to banish Hagar and Ishmael to the wilderness. This episode is depicted in this German print, which reproduces, in opposite orientation, a Dutch oil painting. Prestel employed selective inking and multiple plates to convey the visual complexity of the painted original, a version of which belongs to the RISD Museum.



Prestel and his wife, Maria Katharina, were early practitioners of color aquatint in Germany, specializing in facsimile reproductions of drawings and paintings from famous collections. Their prints were treasured by art lovers such as writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and were widely admired for their technical innovations.

Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, French, 1734-1781

Head of a Turk without a Moustache (Tête de Turc sans moustaches), from *The First Series of Headdresses Sketched from Life (Première Suite de Coiffures Dessinées d'Après Nature)*, 1768

Etching and aquatint on laid paper

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 66.233

These portraits were based on drawings Le Prince made during his extensive travels in Russia. Back in France, he started publishing prints in 1768 using a particular method of aquatint that allowed him to attain a painterly fluidity while retaining a high degree of control. Printed in brown ink, the plates replicated the visual qualities of pen and wash, catering to an expanding market for drawings. Le Prince was closely associated with Saint-Non, but the two printmakers developed different techniques for etching tone.



Le Prince became famous for his prints and genre paintings of Russian exotica. His taste for strong tonal contrasts and orientalist subjects earned him the nickname of "the Rembrandt of our time."

RISD MUSEUM

Bernard Boutet de Monvel, French, 1884-1949

The Strollers (Les Marcheurs), ca. 1910

Color etching and aquatint on wove paper

Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.2304

As two elegant gentlemen in bowler hats stroll a Parisian street, a fashionable lady enters the frame at left. While this print has the appearance of a fleeting snapshot, its making was laborious and time consuming. Multiple plates—one for each color—were printed consecutively in careful registration, with the printmaker letting the inks dry between passes in the press so the colors did not blend.

Influenced by photography and Japanese prints, Boutet de Monvel turned to color printing at a time it had become unfashionable because of its associations with commercial advertising. He was encouraged by the printer Eugène Delâtre, who persuaded a number of artists to revive the medium, including Mary Cassatt, whose work hangs nearby in this gallery.



Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, French, 1734-1781

Head of a Woman (Tête de femme vue de face), from *The First Series of Headdresses Sketched from Life (Première Suite de Coiffures Dessinées d'Après Nature)*, 1768

Etching and aquatint on laid paper

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 66.234

These portraits were based on drawings Le Prince made during his extensive travels in Russia. Back in France, he started publishing prints in 1768 using a particular method of aquatint that allowed him to attain a painterly fluidity while retaining a high degree of control. Printed in brown ink, the plates replicated the visual qualities of pen and wash, catering to an expanding market for drawings. Le Prince was closely associated with Saint-Non, but the two printmakers developed different techniques for etching tone.



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Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, French, 1734-1781

Head of a Man (Tête d'homme renversée), from *The First Series of Headdresses Sketched from Life (Première Suite de Coiffures Dessinnées d'Après Nature)*, 1768

Etching and aquatint on laid paper

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 66.235

These portraits were based on drawings Le Prince made during his extensive travels in Russia. Back in France, he started publishing prints in 1768 using a particular method of aquatint that allowed him to attain a painterly fluidity while retaining a high degree of control. Printed in brown ink, the plates replicated the visual qualities of pen and wash, catering to an expanding market for drawings. Le Prince was closely associated with Saint-Non, but the two printmakers developed different techniques for etching tone.

Le Prince became famous for his prints and genre paintings of Russian exotica. His taste for strong tonal contrasts and orientalist subjects earned him the nickname of “the Rembrandt of our time.”



Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, French, 1734-1781

Head of a Young Woman (Tête de jeune femme penchée), from *The First Series of Headdresses Sketched from Life (Première Suite de Coiffures Dessinnées d'Après Nature)*, 1768

Etching and aquatint on laid paper

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 66.232

These portraits were based on drawings Le Prince made during his extensive travels in Russia. Back in France, he started publishing prints in 1768 using a particular method of aquatint that allowed him to attain a painterly fluidity while retaining a high degree of control. Printed in brown ink, the plates replicated the visual qualities of pen and wash, catering to an expanding market for drawings. Le Prince was closely associated with Saint-Non, but the two printmakers developed different techniques for etching tone.

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RISD MUSEUM

Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, French, 1734-1781

Head of an Old Woman (Tête de vieille penchée), from The First Series of Headdresses Sketched from Life (Première Suite de Coiffures Dessinnées d'Après Nature), 1768

Etching and aquatint on laid paper

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 66.231

These portraits were based on drawings Le Prince made during his extensive travels in Russia. Back in France, he started publishing prints in 1768 using a particular method of aquatint that allowed him to attain a painterly fluidity while retaining a high degree of control. Printed in brown ink, the plates replicated the visual qualities of pen and wash, catering to an expanding market for drawings. Le Prince was closely associated with Saint-Non, but the two printmakers developed different techniques for etching tone.

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Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, French, 1734-1781

Head of a Turk (Tête de Turc), from The First Series of Headdresses Sketched from Life (Première Suite de Coiffures Dessinnées d'Après Nature), 1768

Etching and aquatint on laid paper

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 66.230

These portraits were based on drawings Le Prince made during his extensive travels in Russia. Back in France, he started publishing prints in 1768 using a particular method of aquatint that allowed him to attain a painterly fluidity while retaining a high degree of control. Printed in brown ink, the plates replicated the visual qualities of pen and wash, catering to an expanding market for drawings. Le Prince was closely associated with Saint-Non, but the two printmakers developed different techniques for etching tone.

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RISD MUSEUM

Mary Cassatt, American, 1844-1926
Under the Horse Chestnut Tree, 1896-1897
Drypoint and aquatint
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 1996.101

Sitting beneath a tree, a woman holds up a small child as their gazes interlock. Intimate depictions of mothers and children such as this one were central to the work of Cassatt, an American who trained and permanently settled in France.

After visiting an exhibition of Japanese prints in 1890, Cassatt was inspired to revisit the technique of multi-plate color aquatint, which had peaked in popularity about a century earlier. Cassatt sought to create the flat planes of color and bold compositions of Japanese woodcuts. By selectively inking certain areas of the plates, such as the child's hair, she extended the color range of this image, which was printed from three plates.

