Printmaking Techniques

The two-dimensional works in this exhibition are dominated by prints, the medium that has brought art to a larger public for many centuries. Prints are made using various techniques chosen to exploit the specific characteristics of each method. The collection that the McKee assembled for the Morse demonstrates many of these methods.

Relief Prints

In making relief prints, such as the woodcut prints by Ando Hiroshige and wood engravings by Winslow Homer, the image to be printed is formed on the surface of the wood block by cutting away the part of the surface (the negative space) that is not to be printed. The wood block is inked and pressed by hand onto slightly damp paper. In the case of Hiroshige’s color prints, however, a separate plate was made for each color and registered to align properly with the image.

Intaglio Prints

Also on view are a large number of intaglio prints, which include engraving, etching, and drypoint. Each of these methods creates a distinctive appearance, and several are sometimes combined on a single plate. All of these processes involve cutting the image to be printed into the surface of the plate so that the image is below the surface of the plate—exactly the opposite from the woodcut.

To make an engraving, a burin—a tool with a metal shaft with a sharply beveled point that can cut a V-shaped groove—is used to cut into a metal, usually copper or zinc, plate, providing a clear, rich line for printing. An etching is created when the image is drawn through a layer of acid-resistant particles, or “ground,” on the plate. The plate is dipped in acid, which creates the lines of the drawing and which ink will fill for printing purposes. To create a softer line more like a drawing, the artist places a piece of paper over a greasier or softer ground and uses a pencil or crayon to mark the ground before it is placed in the acid bath.

With drypoint techniques, lines are scratched into the plate with a steel tool that produces a “burr” on either side of the line. This results in soft, velvety lines in the finished print.

Planographic Prints (Lithographs)

The exhibition features, too, a number of lithographs by such artists as Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood. In this method, the designs are drawn with greasy ink or crayons on specially prepared limestones. The stone is moistened with water, which the stone absorbs in areas not covered by the drawing. Because oil and water do not mix, an oily ink, applied with a roller, adheres only to the drawing and is repelled by the wet parts of the stone.

15) Tip to Bottom:

- Between Birches, 1947
  - Etching
  - Luigi Lucioni, 1900-1988, American (PR-013-80)

16) Tip top, left to right:

- Making Hay, 1972
  - Etching
  - Paul Happer, 6 July 1872
  - American (PR-056-94)

- Summer Afternoon, 1979
  - Lithograph
  - John Steuart Curry, 1897-1946, American
  - (PR-078-80)

- Down to the Bridge, n.d.
  - Etching
  - George A. Brindley, 1889-1968, American
  - (PR-040-81)

Imperishable, 1927

- Engraving on toned paper
  - Rockwell Kent, 1882-1971, American
  - (PR-113-80)

- Bottoms up, left to right:

- City Park, Winter, c. 1947
  - Lithograph
  - Aaron Bohrod, 1907-1992, American
  - (PR-114-80)

- Company for Supper, 1948
  - Lithograph
  - Dale Nichols, 1901-1949, American
  - (PR-055-81)

- December Afternoon, 1941
  - Lithograph
  - Grant Wood, 1891-1942, American
  - (PR-055-94)

- Gift of Center Street Gallery

- Towers of San Gimignano, 1922
  - Etching
  - John Taylor Arms, 1887-1953, American
  - (PR-041-94)

- Imperishable, 1927
  - Engraving on toned paper
  - Rockwell Kent, 1882-1971, American
  - (PR-113-80)

- Bottoms up, left to right:

- City Park, Winter, c. 1947
  - Lithograph
  - Aaron Bohrod, 1907-1992, American
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- Company for Supper, 1948
  - Lithograph
  - Dale Nichols, 1901-1949, American
  - (PR-055-81)

- December Afternoon, 1941
  - Lithograph
  - Grant Wood, 1891-1942, American
  - (PR-055-94)

- Gift of Center Street Gallery

- Towers of San Gimignano, 1922
  - Etching
  - John Taylor Arms, 1887-1953, American
  - (PR-041-94)
Looking into the Hand Mirror (No. 2), c. 1908
Drypoint
Mary Cassatt, 1844-1926, American (PR-04-94)

5) Design for a fan, 1887-1888
Gouache and pastel on paper
Paul Gauguin, 1848-1903, French (P-030-71)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Taylor Alda

6) Top to bottom:
Limehouse, 1889
Etching
James Abbott McNeill Whistler, 1834-1903, American (PR-027-91)
Gift of John G. Eckel

Billingsgate, 1889
Etching
James Abbott McNeill Whistler, 1834-1903, American (PR-077-80)

The Pool, 1889
Etching
James Abbott McNeill Whistler, 1834-1903, American (PR-097-80)

7) Sara Wearing Her Bonnet and Coat, c. 1904
Transfer lithograph
Mary Cassatt, 1844-1926, American (PR-037-94)

8) Top to bottom:
Peasage &Auvers (Landscape at Auvers), 1873
Etching
Paul Cézanne, 1839-1906, French (PR-091-98)

9) Left to right:
From One Hundred Famous Views of Edo, #78: Shinnme Shrine and Zozo Temple in Shibai, 1858
Color woodcut
Ando Hiroshige, 1797-1858, Japanese (PR-088-82)
Gift of Howard and Martha Seibert

10) The Bridge, 19th century
Color woodcut
Katsukawa Shunman, 1797-1858, Japanese (PR-088-82)
Gift of Howard and Martha Seibert

11) Top to bottom:
Tower of Library in Parliament Building, Ottawa, June 80, 1939
Watercolor on paper
Louis C. Tiffany, 1848-1933, American (SS-024)
Gift of Comfort Tiffany Gilder

Durham, England, 1880
Etching
Samuel Colman, 1832-1920, American (PR-036-84)

12) Top to bottom:
Night Shadows, 1921
Etching
Edward Hopper, 1882-1967, American (PR-036-92)

Phoebus on Halzaphron, 1901
Oil on paper board
Maxfield Parrish, 1870-1966, American (P-035-92)

13) The Specialist, c. 1945
Conte crayon on wove paper
Norman Rockwell, 1894-1978, American (PR-054-94)

14) Top row, left to right:
Edge of Town, 1938
Lithograph
Thomas Hart Benton, 1889-1975, American (PR-014-84)

Bottom row, left to right:
Instruction, 1940
Lithograph
Thomas Hart Benton, 1889-1975, American (PR-030-84)

Rainy Day, 1938
Lithograph
Thomas Hart Benton, 1889-1975, American (PR-031-93)

Sunset, 1941
Lithograph
Thomas Hart Benton, 1889-1975, American (PR-058-94)

Back from the Fields, 1945
Lithograph
Thomas Hart Benton, 1889-1975, American (PR-287-89)

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