

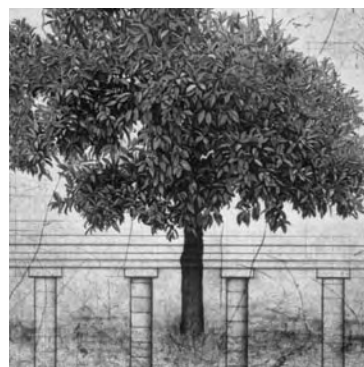


California
Society of
Printmakers

THE CALIFORNIA PRINTMAKER

THE JOURNAL OF THE CALIFORNIA SOCIETY OF PRINTMAKERS | 2005

Traces Chiaroscuro to contemporary printmaking



Acknowledgments

To evolve into its final goal—a fine work on paper—an original print requires many steps and an abundance of collaboration. Not only is there collaboration between the artist's hand, the matrix, the inks, paper and press, there is also often a working partnership between artists, master printmakers, or fine art presses. In the same manner, this journal could not have grown into existence without the cooperation, diligence, and efforts of numerous individuals. My heartfelt gratitude goes to:

- Former board member Kim Vanderheiden for suggesting me as guest editor
- CSP President Benny Alba for her words of encouragement
- Charles Schlossman, seasoned editor of the Achenbach Graphic Arts Council Newsletter, for his editorial counsel and recommendation of a style guide
- Herlinde Spahr for her skilled proofreading and professed desire to catch “one wayward apostrophe”
- 13² Studio for their excellent graphic design skills
- Finally, *merci mille fois* for your responsiveness, hard work, and patience, Andrew Raftery, David Smith-Harrison, Herlinde Spahr, and Yuji Hiratsuka

The Journal 2005

GUEST EDITOR
Mary B. Moorhead

COPY EDITOR
Brandon Oto

ADDITIONAL COPY EDITING
Herlinde Spahr

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION
13² Studio, San Francisco, CA

PRINTING
Inkworks, Berkeley, CA ☻

FRONT COVER IMAGES
Antonio da Trento, Italian, *Narcissus*, ca. 1525,
chiaroscuro woodcut from two blocks, 11³/₁₆" x 7¹/₁₆",
The RISD Museum, Museum Works of Art fund, 69.180,
photography by Eric Gould

Yuji Hiratsuka, *Ring Drop Earring*, 2004,
intaglio & chine collé, 24" x 18"

David Smith-Harrison, *Yucatan*, 1991,
intaglio & chine collé, image 36" x 24", paper 46" x 31¹/₂"

Herlinde Spahr, *Nightwork V*, 2001,
levigator lithograph, 19" x 11"

©2005 The California Society of Printmakers.
All rights reserved. Copyrights of all images remain
with the artists unless otherwise stated.

California Society of Printmakers

BOARD MEMBERS

PRESIDENT
Benny Alba

VICE PRESIDENT
Warren Lee

SECRETARY
Jessica Dunne

TREASURER
Peter Leone McCormick

DIRECTORS

Jeri Burnside
Margaret-Ann Clemente
Herman Coleman
Barbara de Groot
Joan Finton
Lars Johnson
Joe Ramos
Sara Richardson
Lila Wahrhaftig
Xavier Viramontes

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:

The California Society of Printmakers, founded in 1913, is an international nonprofit arts organization that promotes the appreciation of prints and printmaking. A majority of the CSP's current members live and work in California, but membership extends throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, South America, Europe and Asia.

Membership categories include: artist, associate, patron and honorary. Artist members are admitted only by portfolio review.

SEND INQUIRIES TO:

California Society of Printmakers
PO Box 475422
San Francisco, CA 94147

CSP VOICEMAIL: (415) 905-4296

WEB SITE: www.caprintmakers.org

EMAIL: caprintmakers@yahoo.com

Editor's Note

As a print collector and art patron, I was honored to accept CSP board member Kim Vanderheiden's invitation to act as guest editor for *The Journal* 2005. Yet I was initially perplexed. How could I, a writer and consultant in the field of aging and eldercare, create a journal for successful, knowledgeable, working artists?

Last July, towards the end of a muggy day that ended a busy week of college touring with my son, the seed of an answer sprouted. We were in Providence Rhode Island. I announced to my husband and son that we could not return to California without visiting the Rhode Island School of Design's art museum. Thankfully they agreed, and the museum's pleasing ambiance and wide range of exhibits refreshed our spirits. My husband and son lingered at the glass objects exhibition, while I was drawn into a cool, darkened room.

Reveling in the respite, I was surprised to discover an exhibition of chiaroscuro woodcuts, dated from 1520 to 1800, that had been selected from the museum's permanent collection by Assistant Curator Clare Rogan. My love of history, integral to both my work with older adults and my print collecting hobby, compelled me to look carefully and absorb my surroundings. I was struck by the detailed beauty and incredible tonal range of the woodcuts, as well as the project's link between the Old Masters' world and our contemporary times. There was an elegant synergy between the scholarly printed information accompanying each print and a demonstration video and display case, presenting Andrew Raftery's step-by-step creation of a five-block chiaroscuro woodcut. I wanted more people to know about this project and decided to invite Andrew to contribute to *The Journal* 2005.

In selecting a journal theme, it seemed fitting to interweave aspects of art history's broad sweep with contemporary printmaking practicalities. The past and present converge on the walls of David Smith-Harrison's printmaking studio and home, richly informing his meticulous etchings. A fine example is his intaglio etching *Homage*, where he chooses a unique personal symbol to create a tribute to Rembrandt's etching *The Shell*.

Herlinde Spahr poetically ponders the unique challenges and gracious gifts presented to artists who choose printmaking as their creative vehicle, no matter the era. Commenting on the medium's requirements for a matrix, press, numerous tools, the proofing and editioning process and much more, she elaborates on the "radically indirect nature of printmaking."

Printmaking instructor and artist Yuji Hiratsuka reminds us that paper is the all-important supportive base to imagery. He touches on paper's historical roots and explains his personal approach to chine collé. He also shares his innovative method for simplifying the creation of multicolored etchings.

It has been a joy to create this year's edition of *The Journal* and to learn from the contributing artists. And it is my hope that this journal offers useful and inspirational information to printmaking artists as well as print admirers.

Mary

CONTENTS

2

Collaborating
Through a Medium:
A New Chiaroscuro
Woodcut After
Parmigianino

by Andrew Raftery

8

Additive/Subtractive
Method with Chine
Collé in Four Color
Intaglio Printmaking

by Yuji Hiratsuka

12

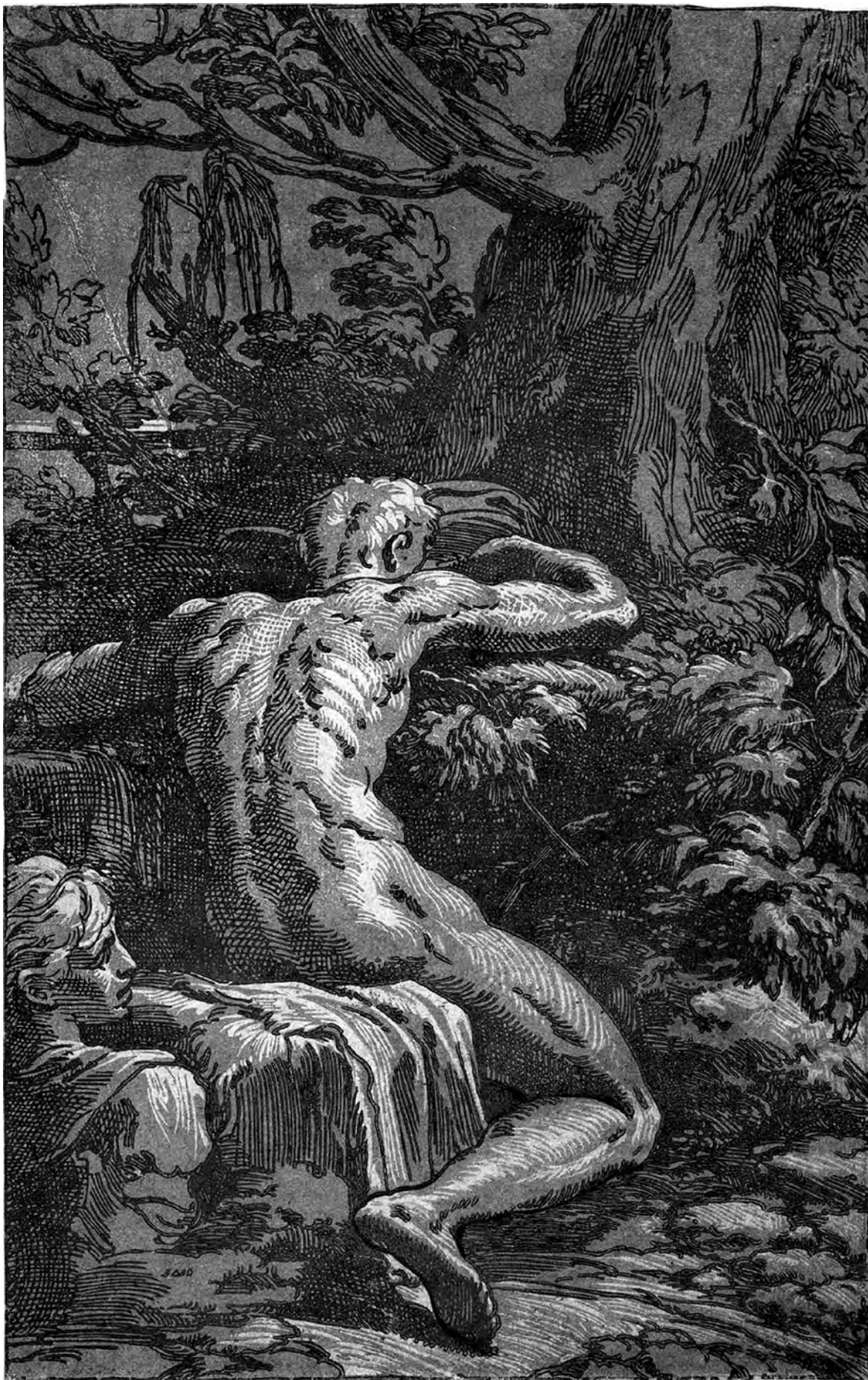
David Smith-Harrison:
An Unconscious
Dialogue Through
the Centuries

by Mary B. Moorhead

18

About Printmaking
as an Indirect Art

by Herlinde Spahr



Antonio da Trento, Italian, *Narcissus*, ca. 1525 chiaroscuro woodcut from two blocks, 11 ³/₁₆" x 7 ¹/₁₆", The RISD Museum, Museum Works of Art fund, 69.180

When Clare Rogan,
Assistant Curator of Prints,
Drawings, and Photographs
at The RISD Museum,

asked me to develop educational materials for an exhibition of chiaroscuro woodcuts, I was eager to participate but unclear on how to approach the project. Previously, I had made chiaroscuro prints using photopolymer plates printed in relief and had studied historical prints in The RISD Museum's collection to get ideas on colors and the use of layered inks. At first I thought of using one of my own works to demonstrate how a current artist would use a modern version of the technique for contemporary subject matter. After some discussion, Clare and I decided that it would be confusing to show materials different from those used to make the historical works selected for the exhibition, even if the graphic concepts were the same.

I then considered doing an exact copy of a sixteenth-century chiaroscuro woodcut, carving new blocks modeled from one of the prints in the RISD collection or from a reproduction of a well-known work. This idea had more viability as part of the educational program needed for the exhibition. Knowing how long it would take to cut the blocks, I resisted this approach. It struck me as uncreative and I knew that the public would only be drawn in by a project that I would find exciting.

Proselytizing about printmaking was the real attraction of the proposal for me. I am always looking for a platform to convey my message: that prints are incredibly interesting, wonderful, and beautiful. I am aware that many people do not know what they are looking at when they walk through a print exhibition. I can tell by watching that even when the subject or the style of the work is appealing, they are mystified and even put off by the

Collaborating *Through a Medium:*

A New Chiaroscuro Woodcut After Parmigianino

BY **ANDREW RAFTERY**

seemingly inscrutable nature of the prints. I knew that the right display in the upcoming exhibition would make them want to take another look at those marvelous 400-year-old scraps of paper.

It had to be about more than technique. One compelling aspect of many chiaroscuro woodcuts is that they are the result of an intense creative collaboration between the artist who designed the image and the artist who made the separations and cut the blocks. It occurred to me that if I put myself into the position of collaborator with a sixteenth-century artist, my demonstration would have the energy and spirit I needed to make my point. My very postmodern nature relished the idea that I could reach across five centuries and create a brand new print project.

Finding my ideal collaborator was the next step. I did not have to look very far. In April of 2004, I had seen the exhibition *The Art of Parmigianino* at the Frick Collection in New York.¹ Of the approximately eighty works in the exhibition, at least sixty were drawings. There was also a separate gallery devoted to Parmigianino's own etchings and to engravings and chiaroscuro woodcuts made after his drawings.

The draftsmanship of Francesco Mazzuoli (1503–1540), called Parmigianino, does not need my praise. I walked through the galleries and was amazed at the variety of his drawings in both style and technique. The entire experience made me want to extend the range and innovation of my own drawing practice.

When I got to the print section, I expected to be most impressed by Ugo da Carpi's chiaroscuro woodcut, *Diogenes*, ca. 1525,² which was represented by a brilliant impression from Budapest. Indeed, the *Diogenes* was great, but I found myself much more drawn to three chiaroscuro woodcuts by Antonio da Trento, dated between 1527 and 1530. Especially striking was

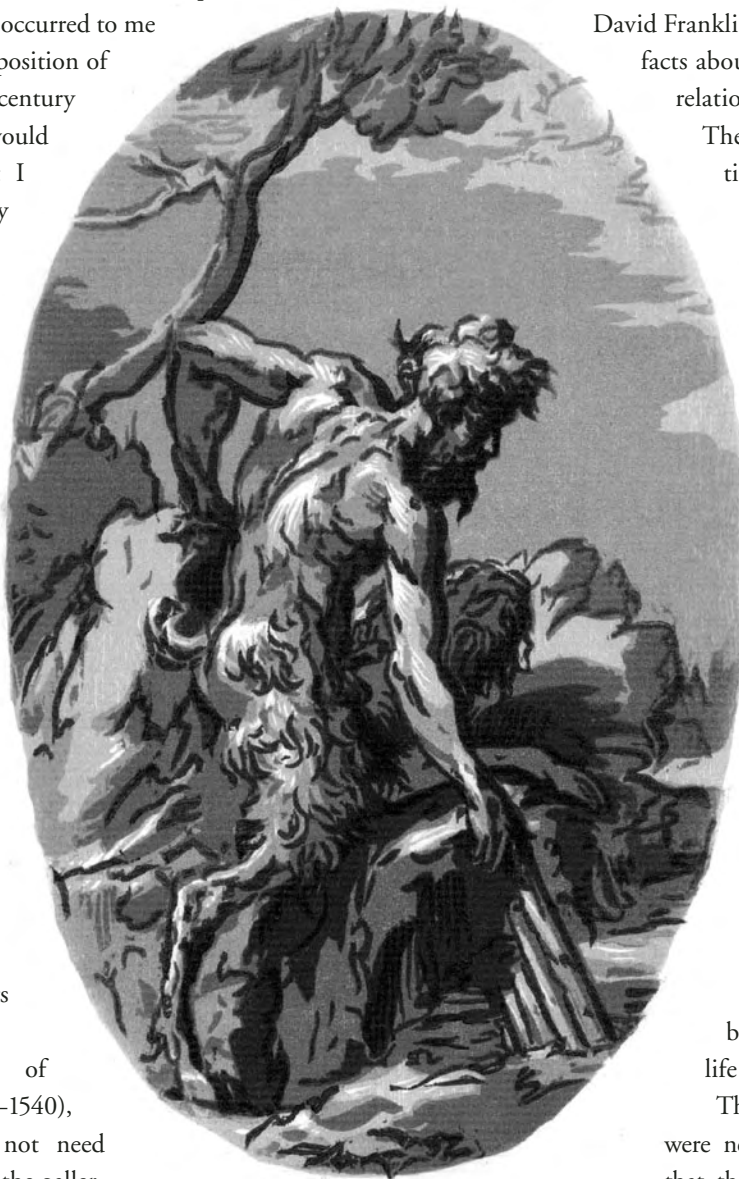
his *Narcissus*,³ the Frick impression printed in brown and black from two blocks. The supple carvings of the black lines and the white highlights achieve remarkable elasticity in the figure of the nude man. The subtle massing of the crosshatching produces a spatial effect that could stand up to any of the etchings in the room: truly a remarkable feat in a woodcut.

When I read the catalog (with entries by David Franklin,⁴) I learned some intriguing facts about Antonio da Trento and his relationship with Parmigianino. The three prints in the exhibition were all mentioned by the sixteenth-century historian of Italian art, Giorgio Vasari, in his biography of Parmigianino. Vasari states that da Trento lived with Parmigianino as an in-house woodcutter. Although it is clear from the existing prints that they were artistically compatible, something went amiss in their relationship. One night da Trento left Parmigianino's house taking all the prints, plates, and drawings he could find.⁵ It is impossible to know what happened between the two men, but even the bare anecdote related by Vasari brings the sixteenth century to life for me.

The drawings stolen by da Trento were never recovered. It is assumed that they were dispersed,⁶ providing models for generations of printmakers.

Further research led me to A. E. Popham's 1971 illustrated catalog of the drawings of Parmigianino.⁷ I was intrigued to note that Popham had a separate category of drawings for chiaroscuro woodcuts.⁸ It took only a short leap to assume that some of these drawings had been produced for da Trento's carvings.

Parmigianino's series of drawings narrating the legend of Marsyas as told by Hyginus⁹ struck me as particularly suited for interpretation as chiaroscuro woodcuts. These drawings



Andrew Raftery, American, b. 1962, *Marsyas Drawing Minerva's Pipes Out of the Water*, 2004, (after Parmigianino), chiaroscuro woodcut, 7 1/2" x 4 3/4"

represent one of Parmigianino's most sustained efforts to present a mythological story through multiple images. In one drawing, Minerva is shown playing the pipes she made from deer bones, then in the next drawing casting them into a river with a curse, apparently because the Gods laughed at the way her cheeks puffed out during her performance. Marsyas is seen retrieving the pipes, and in the next drawing, listening to the violin of Apollo during their ill-fated competition. Other drawings in the same format, less clearly related to Hyginus's story, show the judgment of Midas, Mercury presenting the pipes to Minerva, and Mercury breaking the pipes. There also exists a sketch for the final scene of the flaying of Marsyas by Apollo, the fulfillment of Minerva's curse.¹⁰

The extensive development of this story in images can be compared to Rosso Fiorentino's set of six engravings of the *Labors and Adventures of Hercules* from 1524.¹¹ Parmigianino certainly was familiar with Rosso's engravings, as he had collaborated with Rosso's engraver, Gian Jacopo Caraglio. If Parmigianino's drawings had been executed as a consistent series of prints during his lifetime, the series would have been one of the most important publications in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, rivaling Rosso's *Labors*. The fact that Parmigianino seems to have planned these works as chiaroscuro woodcuts may reflect his lack of access to Caraglio during the later 1520s. Yet considering the nature of the drawings, it is more likely a conscious choice of medium, the chiaroscuro woodcut technique being more appropriate than engraving for Parmigianino's personal style.

One drawing from this series proved especially attractive to me: *Marsyas Pulling Minerva's Flute from the Water*, from the Musée du Louvre.¹² Even the black-and-white reproduction in Popham showed a beautifully realized drawing clearly intended to be translated into a chiaroscuro woodcut. When I found an exceptionally clear color reproduction in Augusta Ghidiglia Quintavalle's 1971 book, *Parmigianino Disegni*,¹³ I knew I had my model.

In this drawing, the half-goat, half-man Marsyas is shown on the rocky edge of a river, bending down as he takes Minerva's flute out of the water. The musculature on the arms and back of Marsyas is superbly realized with firm strokes and shapes that contrast the delicately brushed curves rendering the fur of the tail and goat haunches. Even freer touches suggest the rocks, reeds and the gnarled tree trunk. The farthest layer of space, showing the dawn breaking through the clouds, is indicated with broad washes. White lead highlights are carefully distributed in anticipation of the carved marks that would expose the white of the paper against the lightly toned ground. All of this is rendered with great economy and mastery on an oval that is seven and a half inches at its largest measurement.

The drawing had been rendered as a chiaroscuro woodcut in the sixteenth century. Crudely carved, with extreme simplification of the original forms, it is nevertheless quite cleverly conceived in four blocks. Adam Bartsch, the great nineteenth-century print cataloger, attributed it to Ugo da Carpi.¹⁴ It is now most often ascribed to Niccolo Vicentino,¹⁵ an artist who is thought to have worked without Parmigianino's supervision from the drawings taken by Antonio da Trento.¹⁶ It was of great interest to me to see how a sixteenth-century artist had interpreted the drawing, helping me to define my own goals in collaborating with Parmigianino.

I particularly wanted to capture the liquid quality of Parmigianino's wash shapes and preserve the grace and energy of his pen accents in the carving of the wood. Most sixteenth-century chiaroscuro woodcuts incorporate framing elements in the form of simple borders or complicated fictive frameworks. I decided that my rendition of Parmigianino's drawing would not have a border, the format being defined by the interlocking shapes of the composition. As a twenty-first-century interpreter, I decided to privilege fluid draftsmanship over graphic qualities in my rendition of the drawing.

I also had to consider my overriding technical approach. Solid information on sixteenth-century chiaroscuro woodcut technique is sparse; there are more questions than answers about how drawings were transferred to blocks, registration methods, inks, printing and many other steps along the way. Even the most thoroughly researched attempt to reconstruct a historical technique would primarily be a matter of conjecture. I decided to use available contemporary materials and methods in making my print.

From my own experience working on multilayer prints, I knew that the most challenging part of the process would be drawing the separations—deciding which blocks would be assigned to carry the required layers of information. The ingenuity of Ugo da Carpi is displayed precisely in his mastery of the play between interlocking layers of ink. In much of his work, no single block holds the bulk of the information. The image is only complete when all layers are printed. This approach is different from many early German chiaroscuro woodcuts in which a key block containing contours and all descriptive hatching is modified by a tone block containing nonessential highlights. Vasari is justified in crediting da Capri with inventing something new, even if he did not make the very first chiaroscuro woodcut.¹⁷ da Capri's analysis of drawing in terms of independent layers of values is one of the most important breakthroughs in the history of printmaking, with ramifications for much subsequent color printing.

When employing da Capri's system, it is not possible to complete any one block without consulting working drawings showing the contributions of all the blocks. This complex plan-

ning can only be done by layering drawings made on separate transparent or translucent sheets. It is then possible to map out the role of each layer.

The question of how many layers to include in my print of Parmigianino's *Marsyas* presented a major struggle. I sought to match the economy of the sixteenth-century artists who expressed so much in two, three or four layers. Despite a concentrated effort, I could not figure out how to show everything I thought essential to Parmigianino's drawing in fewer than five blocks. I needed two very light value blocks. The first, lightest block would provide the toned background and be carved with the highlights revealing the white of the paper. The second block would put down a light layer to suggest the atmospheric space and changes of plane on the brightly lit side of the forms. One characteristic that I have noted in chiaroscuro woodcuts printed from three or more blocks is the use of a middle-tone block to provide a definite break between areas flooded with light and the deeply toned shadows. In my plan, this was the role of the third block which placed a dark toning layer on everything that was not touched by the light, much like Parmigianino's broad washes. This layer would receive modification and articulation from an even darker fourth block. Finally, I needed a fifth block to be printed in a very dark ink to add the brisk final strokes that enliven the drawing.

Once the role of each block was resolved, I was ready to draw the separations. The reproduction of the drawing was pinned to my drawing board. I drew on sheets of wet media acetate with India ink. The acetate was taped into place, new layers added as needed. It was pure joy to trace the shapes made by Parmigianino's hand in the 1520s. The grace and intelligence of his work became more apparent to me than ever. The challenge was to retain the freshness of the marks. I discarded many sheets of acetate that seemed stiffly drawn or obviously traced. By using five separate sheets, each representing one of the blocks, I was able to move between layers, adding and deleting drawing as needed.

When the drawings were all taped into position, I made marks for registration. I have never seen an old chiaroscuro woodcut with margins that would allow me to determine the registration system used by the printer. I decided to use a system of notches, carved into the blocks. Lines indicating these notches were drawn on each acetate to ensure that the layers could always be aligned during the printing.

The five completed drawings and the registration marks needed to be transferred to the blocks. It was important to me that the final print appear in the same direction as Parmigianino's drawing. By photocopying the acetate sheet from the back, I was able to work with the image in reverse. This reverse copy of each drawing was shellacked onto its own block.

By carving away the part of the wood covered by the white of the paper, I left the drawing in relief as the printing surface.

At six by eight inches, the cherry blocks were relatively small. It took four weeks of intensive work to carve the blocks. The edge of each form had to be drawn with the tip of a sharp knife held at an angle away from the edge of the positive shape, thus avoiding undercuts and creating a structurally sound printing matrix. The non-printing areas covered by the white of the paper had to be carefully carved away with gouges.

The rewards of woodcut come in the strength that carving imparts to drawing. It was exhilarating to see the independent identity of each block emerge as the background was cut away.

As I was reaching the end of the carving process and getting anxious to begin proofing, Clare contacted me to propose a trip to see the extensive collection of chiaroscuro woodcuts at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. I knew it would be a treat to see the prints and discuss them with Clare.

I was not disappointed. The Boston curators greeted us with carts groaning from the weight of solander boxes. As we opened the first Ugo da Carpi box and started to move from print to print, it became clear that the collection has many prints in multiple impressions. This would be of relatively minor importance in studying most kinds of printmaking. Usually finding the earliest impression in the best possible condition is the primary concern. However, when studying chiaroscuro woodcuts, it is essential to see the many variations in printing among impressions of the same print. We saw early impressions where the crispness of the carving stood out after almost 500 years. By looking at the prints for evidence of wormholes in the blocks we were able to follow the sequence of printings. The range of color variations was astounding. Antonio da Trento's *Narcissus* was represented by no fewer than eleven impressions, each one quite different from the others. The prints showed a broad range in the quality of the ink layers and the allowable changes in registration.

I had often examined sixteenth-century chiaroscuro woodcuts and wondered about the excessively oily or crumbly ink layers and the loose registration, assuming that the printers had trouble with inks, rollers or presses. Looking at a large group of these prints made me reconsider this idea. Having seen the brilliant single-color prints created in Venice during the sixteenth century, I am aware that Italian printers were capable of pulling superb impressions from woodblocks. They were also able to do precise two-color registration in letterpress. The aesthetic imperative that informed the chiaroscuro printers of Parmigianino's time was clearly different from that of most other printers. It really was an experimental medium, with each impression offering a potential variation on the information contained in the blocks.

The other revelation at the MFA Printroom was



Antonio Maria Zanetti, Italian, 1680–1757, *Sibyl*, 1724, (after Parmigianino), chiaroscuro woodcut, 7⁵/₁₆" x 4¹/₁₆", The RISD Museum, Gift of Henry D. Sharpe, 50.142

Antonio Maria Zanetti (1679–1767). I knew his prints from Bartsch,¹⁸ and had seen his prints for sale at the International Fine Print Dealers Association Print Fair in New York. Clare had shown me some of his chiaroscuro woodcuts as she was considering works for the RISD exhibition. They struck me

as curious and charming, but not particularly substantial. At the MFA we saw two complete sets of chiaroscuro woodcuts and engravings after Parmigianino drawings, dated from 1722 to 1741 and published as a group in 1749. They were bound in sumptuous albums by Zanetti, one with the Zanetti insignia. Loose impressions were available for viewing in several large boxes. As a group, in brilliant, fresh impressions, they were very beautiful. Clare and I stood side by side as we paged through two copies of the same album. Typical of chiaroscuro printers, Zanetti had greatly varied the colors between impressions of the same print. Unlike the sixteenth-century printers, his inking was perfect with excellent transparency. The colors were particularly fanciful with delicate pastel pinks opposed to bright turquoise and indescribably lovely shades of greens and grays. Zanetti had carefully trimmed the prints and mounted them in the albums with hand painted watercolor mounts in carefully coordinated and contrasting colors. The prints are labeled with highly ornamental text carved right into the woodblocks.

Zanetti owned the Parmigianino drawings he reproduced. They had all formed part of the vast drawing collection of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel (1586–1646) and had been purchased by Zanetti at the estate sale of the Earl's son in 1720. It is interesting to note that although Zanetti is known to have been involved in the art trade, selling antiquities to English collectors, he retained his Parmigianino drawings, which were not dispersed until they were sold by his nephews in 1787.¹⁹ This demonstrates that the series of prints was not intended as a kind of sale catalog. It really is meant to pay homage to Parmigianino and the chiaroscuro woodcuts of the sixteenth century.

Zanetti not only loved his Parmigianino drawings, he was deeply steeped in the tradition of the chiaroscuro woodcut, a technique that had been all but forgotten by the 1720s when he started his series of reproductions. Often characterized as an aristocratic amateur, Zanetti's carving skills were of a very high order as was his understanding of the roles

of the separate blocks. Stylistically, his chiaroscuro woodcuts fall into two categories; two-block prints with extensive cross-hatching highlighted by a single tone block such as practiced by Antonio da Trento in his *Narcissus*, and complex four-block prints with interlocking layers of shape in the tradition of Ugo da Carpi's *Diogenes*.

Zanetti's interpretations of Parmigianino's inventions are among the most sympathetic and successfully executed after the sixteenth century. In his own way, he was able to collaborate with Parmigianino over the distance of two centuries. He also integrated a strikingly eighteenth-century quality into his prints as exemplified by his use of tender and delicate colors. Zanetti's project is a remarkable example of an independent meditation on art history by a knowledgeable and gifted artist.

After leaving the MFA print-room, I boarded the train for Providence more inspired than ever. I had found a sense of direction to guide me when printing the blocks, understanding that the print run would be more about variations than about a uniform edition. Zanetti gave me a new point of contact with the history of the chiaroscuro woodcut. My print would not only be a response to Parmigianino and his contemporaries, it would take its place in a long continuum of artworks inspired by the sixteenth-century master.

I finished carving the blocks over the next week just in time for my appointment with Clare and David Henry, at the time the Director of Education at The RISD Museum, to make a short video about the process. The recording captured the excitement of the first proofs pulled from the blocks. I printed

them by hand with highly pigmented lithographic inks thinned with special oils. The initial impressions may have been a little garish but the interlocking shapes pulled together to make the image come to life.

Over the next weeks, I continued to print from the blocks, switching from hand printing to using the lithography press while experimenting with a broad range of color variations. I could not resist the urge to change the colors and create additional combinations. I came to understand the motivations of the sixteenth-century printers. I was eager to see the results of each new color combination. One fixed rule became apparent. The value shift from dark to light, signified by the third block in this case, had to be respected in order for the plastic qualities of the light and space to be successful. All variables of hue and chroma were open to consideration if this break in tone was taken into account.

A surprising discovery was the forgiving nature of the registration. The alignment could shift considerably and the image would still lock into place. This is a characteristic I have observed in many old chiaroscuro woodcuts.

The installation phase of the exhibition at The RISD Museum commenced during the first week of July 2004. The

prints selected by Clare were hung on the walls, their concise labels reflecting only a fraction of the research she had done. My work went into the education case. On display were my drawings, the printing blocks and the carving tools along with separation proofs showing the individual blocks as printed, progressive proofs showing the layers of ink as they had been applied, and several color variations of the final print, all arranged



Hendrik Goltzius, Dutch, 1558-1617, *Proserpina*, ca. 1594, chiaroscuro woodcut, 13 3/4" x 10 1/4", The RISD Museum, Gift of Henry D. Sharpe, 50.150

in the case to clearly illustrate the process. David's video of my demonstration played on a video monitor in the gallery. As I looked around and saw a drawing by Parmigianino, two prints by Antonio da Trento, and four prints by my new friend Zanetti, I was understandably excited about the privilege of being part of such distinguished company.

There was one more discovery for me. I had focused so intently on Italian chiaroscuro woodcuts that I had not considered one of the greatest practitioners in the north, Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617). Upon noticing the Goltzius wall in the exhibition, I recognized another tribute to Parmigianino in one of the six images from Goltzius's *The Deities* series, 1588–90. In its figural style and composition, the print of *Proserpina* clearly reflected ideals set forth by Parmigianino in drawings such as the *Marsyas*. Goltzius was well known for challenging the masterpieces of the past with conscious emulation.²⁰ In *Proserpina*, he adapted the interlocking block technique of Ugo da Carpi to render a design that could have been drawn by Parmigianino in the late 1520s.

I learned a great deal from this project. On a basic level, I was reminded of the power that woodcut brings to the drawing that is carved. My understanding of the role of the separate layers in a multi-block print was greatly enhanced. I gained a new insight into the potential for experimentation in the proofing

process. Most importantly, I felt a vivid sense of contact with several artists from the past, despite separation by centuries. This truly was collaboration.

When I visited the exhibition during its run, I carefully observed the way in which visitors looked at the work, studied the case, and watched the video. I could see that they came back to the prints on the wall after getting a better understanding of how they had been made. The audience sensed that my print of *Marsyas* was more than just a technical exercise, made to prove an educational point. They recognized it as a contemporary print that claimed kinship with the historical works on display.

Chiaroscuro: A Matter of Tone, curated by Clare Rogan, was on view at The Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, July 16–October 31, 2004. Special thanks to Clare Rogan for asking me to be part of this project and congratulations on her new position as Curator of the Davidson Art Center at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. Thanks also to David Henry for his support of the project and for making the video that added so much to the exhibition. Congratulations to David on his new position as Director of Programs at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston.

NOTES

¹ *The Art of Parmigianino*, organized by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, at the Frick Collection, New York, January 27–April 18, 2004.

² Karpinski, Caroline, ed. *The Illustrated Bartsch, Vol. 48, Formerly Volume 12, Italian Chiaroscuro Woodcuts*. (New York: Abaris Books, 1983), Diogenes (B.XII,100.10), illus. p. 155.

³ Karpinski, *Narcissus* (B.XII,148.13), illus. p. 249.

⁴ Franklin, David, *The Art of Parmigianino* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003).

⁵ Franklin, p. 214.

⁶ Landau, David and Parshall, Peter, *The Renaissance Print, 1470–1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp.155 and 159.

⁷ Popham, A. E., *Catalogue of the Drawings of Parmigianino: Vol. I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

⁸ Popham, vol. I, pp. 11–17.

⁹ Popham, cat. 391, *Minerva Playing on the Pipes*, (Louvre), cat. 390, *Minerva Casting Away the Pipes*, (Louvre), cat. 392, *Marsyas Drawing the Pipes out of the Water*, (Louvre), cat. 319, *Contest of Apollo and Marsyas*, (Pierpont Morgan Library), cat. 395, *Mercury Offering the Pan-Pipes to Minerva*, (Louvre), cat. 394, *Mercury Breaking the Pan-Pipes*, (Louvre), cat. 411, *Man in an Attitude of Surprise, (Midas Judging Apollo and Marsyas)* (Louvre).

¹⁰ Popham, vol. I, p. 141.

¹¹ Carroll, Eugene A., *Rosso Fiorentino: Drawings, Prints, and Decorative Arts* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1987), pp. 75–87.

¹² Popham, vol. II, illus. pl. 131.

¹³ Quintavalle, Augusta Ghidiglia, *Parmigianino Disegni* (Florence, Italy: La Nuova Italia, 1971), illus. pl. XXXIV.

¹⁴ Karpinski, *Pan (Marsyas)*, (B.XII,123.24), illus. p. 196.

¹⁵ André, Paul, Publication Director, *The Renaissance Engravers* (Bournemouth, England: Parkstone/Aurora Publications, 1996), pp. 50–51.

¹⁶ Popham, vol. I, p. 13.

¹⁷ André, p. 46.

¹⁸ Karpinski, pp. 271–342.

¹⁹ Popham, vol. I, p. 32.

²⁰ Leeftang Ger Luijten, Huigen, *Hendrick Goltzius: Drawings, Prints and Paintings 1558–1617* (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Waanders Publishers, 2003), pp. 223–225.

Andrew Raftery, *Marsyas Drawing Minerva's Pipes Out of the Water*, courtesy of the artist. Copyright of image remains with the artist.

Antonio Maria Zanetti, *Sibyl*; Antonio da Trento, *Narcissus*; and Hendrik Goltzius, *Proserpina* were all photographed by Erik Gould and are courtesy of The RISD Museum. Copyright of images remains with the museum.

Additive / Subtractive Method with Chine Collé in Four Color Intaglio Printmaking

BY YUJI HIRATSUKA

AS A PRINT ARTIST who uses *chine collé* frequently, I'd like to discuss the method, first in terms of its historical background and aesthetic nature, then the actual process and materials (paper, adhesive, inks, etc.) involved in my intaglio printmaking technique.

BACKGROUND

The history of paper parallels the history of civilization. Invented in China around 100 AD, the use of paper spread to the West by the twelfth century. The introduction of paper revolutionized lives, especially in the fields of communication and documentation. By the eighth century the Japanese were aware of paper, and were transforming it into a great variety of daily commodities: bags, umbrellas, lanterns, masks, toys, *shoji*, and *fusuma* (sliding window screens and doors). Nowadays, washi paper (commonly misunderstood as a rice paper, but usually made from kozo, mitsumata, or gampi bark) from Japan has attracted the attention of many artists in the world due to its durability and physical beauty.

For printmakers, no matter what kind of printmaking technique they use—relief, intaglio, lithography, or monotype—the



Drama Queens, 2004, intaglio & chine collé, 24" x 18"



Ring Drop Earring, 2004, intaglio & chine collé, 24" x 18"

type of paper that supports their images is an undeniably important concern. The best paper, when handled properly, can help produce the finest quality of image.

The printmaking technique of chine collé is traditionally defined as a method of adhering with glue a thinner piece (or multiple pieces) of paper onto a larger and heavier sheet. The papers and glue are passed through the press at the same time that the inked image is printed. The French word *chine* means “paper” (or “China,” if the c is capitalized) and *collé* means “stuck down.”

Many prominent artists, including Redon, Bresdin, Henri de Fantin-Latour, Matisse, and Picasso have often used this method in producing their prints. Chine collé enriched the Edgar Degas lithograph *Woman at Her Toilette* with a unique dimension of tones and textures from handmade fibrous paper.

Today, professional print workshops around the world often collaborate with contemporary artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Francisco Clemente in creating chine collé prints. One of Jim Dine’s heart prints contrasts the simple subject matter against the complex printing process of woodcut, lithograph and chine collé. In university environments, the technique has become a common facet of the printmaking curriculum, and museum curators and print collectors are always interested in and appreciate chine collé prints, which can hold extra value because of their subtle nuances.

In Japan the chine collé printing process is called *gampi zuri*. *Gampi* is one of the Japanese washi papers, usually the thinnest, strongest, and most expensive. *Zuri* (or *suri*) simply means “printing.” The gampi paper, most of which has a beautiful sheen of amber, yields stunning details and captures intricate tones when

printed together with a high quality rag paper using clear *nori* (rice) paste. In old times, *ukiyo-e* painters used to draw their designs on this paper. Engravers pasted it onto a block, reversing the image, and carved according to the design.

MY PERSONAL TECHNIQUE USING CHINE COLLÉ WITH TRADITIONAL AND INNOVATIVE ETCHING

With continuous alterations to a copper plate, I print a sequence of black, yellow, red, and blue, passing the same plate through the press for each design and color change.

To begin this process, the first tones are given to the plate using line etching, drypoint, aquatint, soft-ground, whiteground, sugarlift, photocopy transfer, and so on. I pull my first color (black), completing the entire edition printing straight onto thin mulberry kozo paper, as gampi is too expensive for my uses.

With these first impressions, I work back into the plate with a scraper, burnisher, and a palm sander to enhance the light areas and the motif. If certain etched areas need to be made completely flat once again, I fill them with Bondo Plastic Metal (found at auto supply stores) and sand them smooth. I repeat this process for each color in the edition.

This printing process has several advantages over printing straight onto rag paper using multiple plates

for each color. Using a single copper plate means that I don’t have to buy extra plates for each color. It also enables very accurate registration because the ghost image from previous printing acts as a guide to create the next image easily. I don’t have to keep a master drawing on tracing paper to transfer the image to other plates. In addition, the Japanese paper I use for editioning turns transparent when it’s misted with a water spray. When I place this misted paper onto the plate, I can see through to the



Field Day Flowers, intaglio, 2004, relief & chine collé. 47" x 31"

image on the copper plate as well as the image on the paper. I simply adjust and match up these images by eye. No complicated registration systems are required.

Furthermore, it is possible to work multiple images on a single copper plate. This makes printing time significantly shorter. For example, instead of editioning four small images individually, I can draw four different images on a copper plate and print them altogether, as often seen in lithographic and silkscreen printing. After completing the edition I cut it into four sets of prints and then mount each print individually onto rag paper.

ALTERED CHINE COLLÉ TECHNIQUE

As in the French translation of “chine collé,” I apply glue to the back of the kozo paper after completing the aforementioned process (CMYK printing—cyan, magenta, yellow, black) and pass it through the press with a dry heavier rag paper (BFK Rives, Arches, Somerset, et al.) beneath. I use Duromount R (Durotech Co.)—a thin plastic film coated with acid-free archival adhesive on both sides—for mounting the kozo onto rag paper. Although I call my artwork chine collé prints for convenience, according to the strict definitions, my intaglio prints should be classified as “printed on Japanese paper then dry mounted on aragpaper,” since I don’t print chine collé paper and dampened rag papers simultaneously, nor do I use any water-soluble or powder paste for gluing.

I learned this dry mounting technique working at a print studio in Osaka, Japan a couple of decades ago. The problem I found then was the use of a spray adhesive, which was non-archival and not permanent. After searching for a replacement, I came to the conclusion that Duromount was the best choice

for my uses. I also found that Roplex (by Talas)—which resembles PVA but dries very slowly, making the mounting process much easier—was far more durable than traditional wheat or nori paste.

INTAGLIO CLASS AT OSU

I’m currently a printmaking instructor at Oregon State University, where I teach all levels of printmaking courses to undergraduates (BFA, BA and BS). While intermediate level stu-

dents are required to work with the basic black & white intaglio process (drypoint, etching, softground, and so forth), advanced students are encouraged to explore color and chine collé printing. Although my own color process is always black, yellow, red, and blue, I encourage my students to be flexible. Some try a different order of color, with black coming last, which makes more sense. In the past, oil-based process colors were the only option, but we recently introduced water-soluble inks as well; while slightly inferior in color intensity, they work just fine, because most of the time *light* tones are the key to creating beautiful color layers.

Teaching is also learning. Our students always give me something to learn by watching their successes and mistakes.

Finally, my interest in printmaking is always based on the unpredictable “happy accident,” which only the printmaking process can create. What makes me satisfied is when the artist’s aesthetic and laborious process, required by the media, brings forth a beautiful and harmonious unification.



PJ's Dream, 2004, intaglio & chine collé, 24" x 18"

Images are courtesy of Yuji Hiratsuka. Copyrights of images remain with the artist.

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID SMITH-HARRISON AN UNCONSCIOUS DIALOGUE THROUGH THE CENTURIES

DAVID SMITH-HARRISON lives and works in a carefully tended world apart.

One enters his domain by way of a small patio that links his studio and home, and immediately delights in the magenta fuchsias, creamy calla lilies, thriving topiaried plants, the tart smell of ripe lemons, bushy palms against the blue sky, and several satisfied, sleeping cats. Here and there, a sharp eye can recognize plants from Smith-Harrison's meticulous etchings and watercolors. Red-berried cotoneaster plants fill a balcony, and Smith-Harrison shows off a cotoneaster bonsai of his own creation.

Every inch of space serves a creative purpose, indoors and out. Smith-Harrison's studio is dedicated to designing and etching, and the home area acts as an extension: various stages of printmaking and editioning occur downstairs, while the upstairs is primarily for painting and watercolors.

In both studio and home, visual imagery is central and pervasive. The walls, hallways, doors, refrigerator, even the ceilings are covered collage-style with carefully placed images. Imagery comes from many sources, from art books and magazines to the camera of Smith-Harrison. His many etchings and watercolors are everywhere, side by side with the works of other artists. Two of Smith-Harrison's larger etchings, *Yucatan* and *Dos Palmeras*, framed and hanging against a collaged wall, rivet the viewer. Even the windows offer stunning visuals, ever-changing panoramas of the San Francisco Bay, Golden Gate Bridge, Albany Hill, and the East Bay hills.

We start our interview in Smith-Harrison's home, moving between the kitchen, dining area and living room. Tall, sandy-haired, eloquently loquacious and lively, Smith-Harrison would make a fantastic instructor in studio art or art history. He shakes his head when I remark on this, explaining that he prefers the life of the full-time artist.

MARY MOORHEAD: You are so absolutely surrounded by imagery of all types. May I assume that the works of other artists inform your own?

DAVID SMITH-HARRISON: Oh, yes. I look to the Old Masters, other well-known artists, and my contemporaries for both inspiration and education. It's a common aspect of an artist's education to refer to art that's been created or is being created as they work.

MM: Can you cite specific examples?

DSH: Both here in my home and in the studio, there are dozens of books open to artists, architects, and photographers, past and present. My mentors include Old Masters artists, such as [Albrecht] Dürer, da Vinci, Michelangelo, [Giovanni Battista] Piranesi, [Andrea] Mantegna, and Rembrandt. Additionally, I look to nineteenth century pictorial photographers like Clarence White, [Alfred] Stieglitz or [Edward] Steichen, and nineteenth century botanical artists such as Joseph Redouté. The architectural monologues of Frank Lloyd Wright and Charles A. Platt also inform my work. And of course, there are my contemporaries: Trevor Southey, Betty Freedman, François Houtin, Eric Desmazières and Christopher Brown to name just a few.

Their art inspires me and keeps me company while I work. When I take a break from drawing on a plate, I'll flip through a book, either for my own pleasure or to understand how other artists solve problems, deal with compositional ideas, or line work.

I study Old Masters print work primarily to see how they employ techniques such as crosshatching and drafting the contours of lines that describe forms. Occasionally I'll flip to a page and study one particular aspect that relates to a current project. Say, for my rose prints, I'll study how other artists handled the drawing of flowers. I don't slavishly copy their works; it's for inspiration, technical analysis, and to create a dialogue. And when I have created something that might have gained the interest, ap-



Two Trees with Perspective II, 1997, intaglio, image 8" x 8", paper 16" x 15"

BY **MARY B. MOORHEAD**

preciation, or admiration of an artist long gone, sometimes I'll say out loud, "Oh, my God, I've made a print that Rembrandt would admire."

MM: Why all these pictures on the walls, even the ceiling? Is it to stimulate your subconscious?

DSH: Yes, I like to play with all of these images and then absorb them over time into my unconscious. That's why I have so many open books and collaged walls. There are relationships happening with the collage. I'll put the images up very unconsciously—think, "Oh, this goes here, that goes there," but I let my unconscious mind do the placements. Then I'll sit back and glance at the associations that become apparent and conscious at a later moment.

MM: This looks like so much work. It's all so neatly and exactly placed. Why bother? Are you trying to say something?

DSH: No, not quite. It's a way of seeing the world, about learning to see and appreciating what I see. For example, here, it might have been the humor of this Leonardo da Vinci that intrigued me. See, he's pointing at these two women. A lot of times it can be the compositional movement of juxtaposed images. Look, these two reproductions are the same image. But I flipped one around so it looks like the figures are moving into each other. See it? I just hooked them up together. Often, I will unconsciously find lines that move into each other or colors that move into each other. When I juxtapose images, or when an artist's compositional idea really appeals to me, I'll reinterpret or expand the idea. As I mentioned, it's a dialogue. As if to say, "Oh, you did this really well, let me see if I can do something a bit more personal with this particular articulation."

MM: Is this an aspect of your creative process, as compared to someone else who would prefer the simplicity of white walls?

DSH: Yes, I need to see art, to play with images, see relationships.

Look at my large intaglio print, *El Olivo*. See how the tree floats in the air above a cityscape? The compositional idea for that print developed out of a print made by Albrecht Dürer; the title escapes me. Dürer created a lovely cityscape rooftop view of houses, placed at the bottom of the image; in the sky above, there is an angel standing on a ball. As I worked out the compositional

ideas for *El Olivo*, I ended up creating a very elaborate cityscape. I was not sure what to do with the skies. Then I came across that floating angel. Because I'm so drawn to creating tree imagery, it was natural for me to float the tree in the air, replacing Dürer's compositional idea of the angel on the ball.

MM: Tell me more about your interest in Dürer.

DSH: Oh, I've always felt very connected to Albrecht Dürer's work. He was Northern European Renaissance and very disciplined. Dürer influenced my approach to image making and line work. I also look heavily to the Italian Renaissance artists because of the way they handle both their crosshatching and line work. There's a bit more fluidity to their compositions. Further, I like the combination of volume and space that appears in Renaissance art.

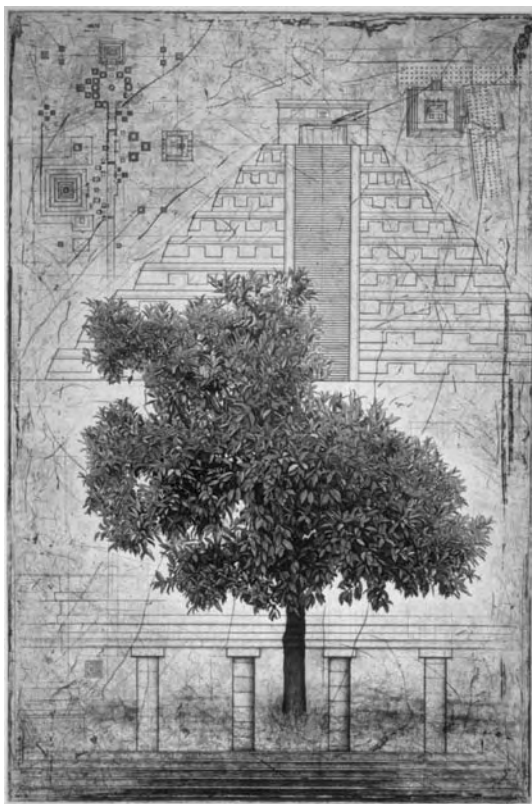
[*Points to image on the wall*] See how there's this strong sense of volume, yet at the same time, there is a sense of very deep space. It was a really important part of the Renaissance art to view space that way.

[*Smith-Harrison points to his color etching Cotoneaster and to an image on the wall.*] I do not remember referring to this image when I created *Cotoneaster*. Yet looking at the image right now, I see the relationship. See the archway here and the two columns, and then the figure of the Christ in the middle? My cotoneaster plant is in the center of an archway, like the image of Christ.

While my work is strongly rooted in the Renaissance and nineteenth-century pictorial photography, my work is very modern. A nineteenth century or Renaissance artist would not have handled space the way I have in this image. [*Pointing to his etching,*

Dos Palmeras] You see the way the trees are floating in and out of the architecture like that? The way the tile-work at the bottom of the print blends and becomes this background space? This is somewhat Japanese, looking up like that. A Renaissance artist would rarely have done this kind of juxtaposition. And here are more modern influences: see these slashes, these very aggressive textural marks? Those take away the preciousness of the very tight drawing. They create a sense of atmosphere and movement. Further, they activate the surface of the image. They are equally important to the spirit and overall impact of the piece as the traditional elements.

MM: Looking around, it strikes me that you have clearly chosen etching as your print technique of choice thus far in your career.



Yucatan, 1991, intaglio & chine collé, image 36" x 24", paper 46" x 31½"

Was this happenstance or a purposeful choice?

DSH: Although my early training was primarily in lithography, I discovered that intaglio offers a very different surface quality. With intaglio, I can work sculpturally into the plate's surface. Working deeper into the plate allows me to create a textural surface. These textural characteristics are then translated onto the print during printing. This extra, subtle dimension in the print surface is very important to me. If you were to look at this print under a magnifying glass [*referring to Yucatan*], you would see that the darkest dark, in these little spots here, is etched much deeper into the plate than these very delicate gray passages. This creates movement, moves your eye around the entire piece of work.

MM: Tell me why trees are often your subject matter.

DSH: There are many influences. When I was young, our family had a cabin near a canyon where there are many kinds of trees. I loved my time there and actually started drawing trees there. Later, as I discovered my art interests, I was largely influenced by the Utah artists working at that time. Many of the Utah artists were doing landscapes. So my early work was pretty traditional watercolors out on location. Then I started focusing on specific trees. Dürer's plant studies were an early influence as well.

As an adult, I did not intentionally set out to use trees as imagery and was not initially aware of their significance to me. Over time, looking at my work overall, it became clear that trees symbolized a variety of personal meanings. At times, the trees were self-portraits; they took on myself in certain settings.

For example, when I created *Dos Palmeras*, I didn't think about the relationship of those two trees together, the way their fronds interconnected. But later, I realized that the trees represented relationships that were going on in my life at the time.

Further, I have learned from my work and reading that trees are a very important part of the human existence. They give us food, shelter, energy for heating, paper for writing, and contribute to many other aspects of our daily lives. Yet, we are endlessly destroying them, in the rain forests, in North America, all over the world. They deserve our reverence.

I am also very inspired by [Piet] Mondrian. I especially love his early work—he was very much interested in landscape imagery early in his career, and then he became heavily focused on trees for a period of time.

MM: And then he took the trees and abstracted them.

DSH: Yes, then he abstracted the trees and there was a transitional period, where realist imagery of trees became more abstract. Then of course he got all the way to this piece here. *Broadway*

Boogie Woogie is somewhere around here. [*Points to collage image of Broadway Boogie Woogie on wall*] That one.

MM: What prompted your print, *Homage, honoring Rembrandt*?

DSH: Rembrandt created a print called *The Little Shell*. He did not make a lot of imagery that was based on still life. That print is unique in his work. The intimacy of that shell, its delicacy and nuance, always appealed to me from the very first time I saw the print. I loved the movement, the way the shell sort of starts out in one point, grows and evolves out. Many artists have created homages to the print, but usually they've created other shells.

When I picked up this pine cone, which had fallen from a tree in my yard [*Smith-Harrison shows me a large pine cone sitting on the kitchen window ledge*], the spirals reminded me of Rembrandt's *Shell*. I really wanted to do an homage to Rembrandt's print without slavishly copying the motif and the subject matter. Because of my obsession with trees, I decided to use the spiraling quality of the pine cone, and the lights and darks of the shell. While my background composition and the placement

of the pine cone is very close to copying Rembrandt's composition, my use of a pine cone is very different. By creating an homage, I am tipping my hat, having a dialogue with Rembrandt.

MM: Let's talk about chiaroscuro works of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Do they inform your work or inspire you?

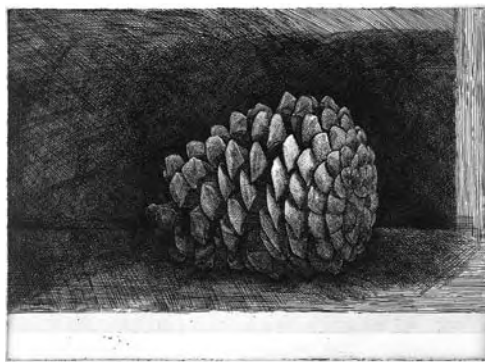
DSH: Oh, yes. Chiaroscuro uses darks, midtones, highlights, and the interpretation of light to create a sense

of volume. See this plate right here that I'm working on? It has the basics of chiaroscuro. There is an aquatinted tone on it already, so the background of the plate is gray. These lines here are going to be dark; I will etch them on the gray background, and then after I etch the plate, I'm going to burnish the highlights. I will pull the highlights of the rose out of the gray tone on that plate.

Interestingly, chiaroscuro wasn't just for woodcuts. During the Renaissance, artists used chiaroscuro to create ornamentation on houses, to decorate facades. Using chiaroscuro, they made what was essentially a painted image look like a sculpted one. For example [*pointing to picture in a book*], this was ornamentation on a house. It looks sculpted, but it's a painted image. The excellent use of midtones, highlights, and darks creates volume and tricks the eye. It was painted to create an illusion.

MM: What are your thoughts on contemporary print work that's not representational or figurative, but swaths of colors or shapes, without line work?

DSH: I respect and am drawn to the very best of modern art. I



Homage, 2003, intaglio, image 18" x 16", paper 26" x 22½"

really love modern artwork, as much as I love the work of the Old Masters, where the figurative realist imagery is more apparent. I very much admire the work of Paulson Press and Crown Point Press, as well as the artists who work there. Many of them may have as much influence of realism as I do, but the end result is different. Their shapes, colors, and forms could be as equally inspired by landscape elements, the human figure, or historically by what other artists have done. But they choose what works for them, what excites their minds, and what gives energy to their work.

MM: How about the work of Chuck Close?

DSH: He's an incredible draftsman. He can draw circles around the best of us. I love the scale of his work. I admire how he plays with a digitized image's influence on the human experience; it's great.

For color and shape, there are many California artists, of course. I love Nathan Oliveira and Richard Diebenkorn. Much of Diebenkorn's work is inspired by landscape, even though his work is abstracted and the elements don't appear specifically related to landscape elements. I am very fond of many others, including Antonio Lopez-Garcia in Spain, Odd Nerdrum in Norway, and Eric Desmazières in Paris. It's hard to isolate any one particular artist because I admire so many, and there may be artists that I don't yet know.

MM: What are your thoughts on the computer as a matrix?

DSH: Some of our very best artists are using the computer as an artistic tool. Not in a formulaic way; they recognize it as an artistic creative tool. As far as the final output, I'm more attracted to computer generated imagery when the output ends up being a film process, such as animation or film, where you see it on the screen. I feel that the luminosity of the lighted screen generally presents pixels at their best. If the computer is used as a reproductive process, simply reproducing a painting, I'm less drawn to it. When it is used as the output process for the artistic manipulation of pixels by an artist who's very talented with this work, it is beautiful, terrific artwork.

Actually, I'm very attracted to digital work itself, digital photography. I enjoy taking photos of flowers from my garden and emailing them to my friends.

MM: Yes, thank you. The last one was gorgeous, especially against the background.

DSH: That flower was in front of this painting. Do you know how many photographs I took? About thirty! One can do this because shooting digitally is so cheap compared to traditional film. When I'm feeling inspired, I often take two hundred shots a day. I'll show you the variations so you'll see that I moved the flower into several locations, even in front of that painting. Also,

I photographed it at different times of the day, and as the petals faded and fell off.

MM: It strikes me that your artwork grows from a complex interweave of artistic inspirations and subconscious connections, personal experiences, and meticulous hard work. Wouldn't it be a good idea to include a short synopsis of this background story with each of your images? Say, in a gallery show, so that viewers could catch a glimpse of this richness?

DSH: Yes, you are correct, but I am not sure that it is necessary for viewers to know my story. Creating is a process of self-discovery, learning about my own individual motivations, my journey, and my purpose. There is depth and history underlying my images—it's not just the initial surface representation, it's everything that has gone on both in my life as an artist before creating that piece, as well as what's taking place while it's being created. Yet viewers will bring their own set of experiences to my work. They don't

have to know what the piece meant to me. Hopefully they will discover something universal, find some poetic depth that will grab hold of their experiences, makes the work meaningful to them.

MM: It has been a great pleasure to listen to your thoughts and absorb the rich ambience created by your collage work, wonderful gardens, your completed artwork and your works in progress. Any thoughts on your place in the history of art?

DSH: I'm excited about how my work might relate to artwork of the past as well as art that may be created five hundred

years from now. I am now at the midpoint of my career; hopefully I will have endless amounts of energy to take advantage of the numerous images that continually develop in my mind. Of course, the greatest art in the world is timeless. I hope somehow to create a small niche in the world's great artwork, a niche that will draw the respect of other artists, inspire other people to appreciate art in general, or learn to see.

It's the archetypal nature of subject matter that I'm drawn to. There may be something archetypal in my work that is not yet obvious, but will be meaningful to future generations. I don't consciously choose certain themes, and I realize that what I'm doing is not necessarily new. But I'm hoping that I might be able to add one little increment of view to the great archetypal advancement of art. My work is very much about synthesis. Synthesis of everything that is the best of the past, and the best of the current, and hopefully envisioning the best of the future.



Royal Palm with Turkish Design, 2002, image 18" x 16", paper 26" x 22 1/2"

Images are courtesy of David Smith-Harrison. Copyrights of images remain with the artist.

About *Printmaking* as an Indirect Art

BY HERLINDE SPAHR



Nightwork V

Spahr 3/7

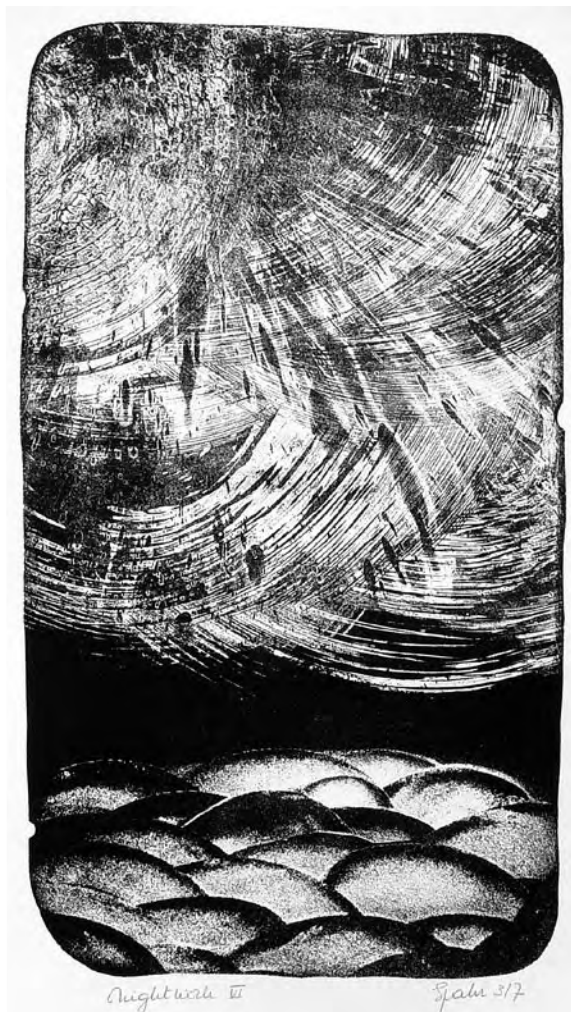
Nightwork V, 2001, levigator lithograph, 19" x 11"

HOW DOES AN ARTIST CAPTURE THE SOUL IN FULL FLIGHT? Can the hand remain steadfast and calm while the heart flares with fever? And will the choice of a particular medium hamper or facilitate that dream of immediacy? More often than not we fail, the bird of paradise dead at our feet, unable to breathe in a world weighed down with matter. But when we succeed, with the help of a medium, we are like the athlete that vaults into the sky, blessing the strength and length of his pole as he falls back to earth.

We all curse our chosen medium. Even the poets, born closest to the mountaintop, bemoan the poverty of language, the use of a medium too desecrated to be spoken in temples. And yet, I have often envied them; they are the lightweights, capable of walking around with their life's work in their pocket. Compared to the printmakers, equipped with burins and brayers, rockers and roulettes, these poets seem so bare, so vulnerable, as if they know that poetry is about fighting the gods naked.

Also the painter, facing the world through a stretch of canvas, will have days when his chosen means of expression fails him. The warp and woof of the linen stares back, and even paint, that most plastic, pliable, and versatile of substances will not undo the gray grid of the ground.

But how much greater the lament of the printmaker whose



Nightwork VI, 2001, levigator lithograph, 19" x 11"

medium does not even allow that immediate contact between paper and pencil, or brush and linen? We must leave our mark in a roundabout way, via the mediation of a matrix, as if the law against any direct contact with the paper is as urgent as that of not looking directly into the sun. The radically indirect nature of printmaking sets it apart in the pantheon of the arts, and the synonyms for the word "indirect" are sadly revealing. One could substitute any of the following to describe the printmaker's medium: "backhanded, circuitous, devious, duplicitous, meandering, sinister, sinuous,

sneaky, tortuous." And there is truth in these words, for when we create a print we create against the grain. Printmaking entails not just the making of a work of art, but the making of a work which in turn will make the work of art. This extra step backward not only forces the artist to work at one remove, but it also affects the artist's vision at the core, because a simple highlight in an eye done with chalk in a drawing must now be rendered as a deep pit gouged out with a knife in a plank of pine. The creation of this deeper, dissimilar level of reality, a netherworld dominated by recalcitrant matter like stone, wood, copper, sends the artist unto a darkened journey during which every gesture will be weighed twice. The dream of immediacy, of an adamic language which allows the artist to express herself effortlessly through an invisible, transparent, fluid medium, is thwarted from the onset in the

making of a print. From now on there is only duplicity, gestures with ulterior motives.

So much of the learning curve of the novice involves not just how to handle the burin, how to carve against the wood's grain, how to feel the invisible grease in the stone, but also how to learn that doublethink which can anticipate how each mark on the matrix will read in terms of its inverted transposition in the final print. The effect of working in an indirect fashion requires the artist to be cunning, to be two to ten steps ahead, to anticipate the many turns, upheavals and reversals that lie between the matrix and its ultimate offspring. Every print, following the demands of the medium, is conceptual in nature, no matter the imagery imposed upon it by the artist. Looking at the chiaroscuro woodcut, its invention at the onset of the sixteenth century was above all a conceptual triumph, the mind learning how to juggle the planning and sequencing of the various tone blocks with the line block to achieve a seamless image of color, highlights and line. Finding the expert cutters would follow.¹

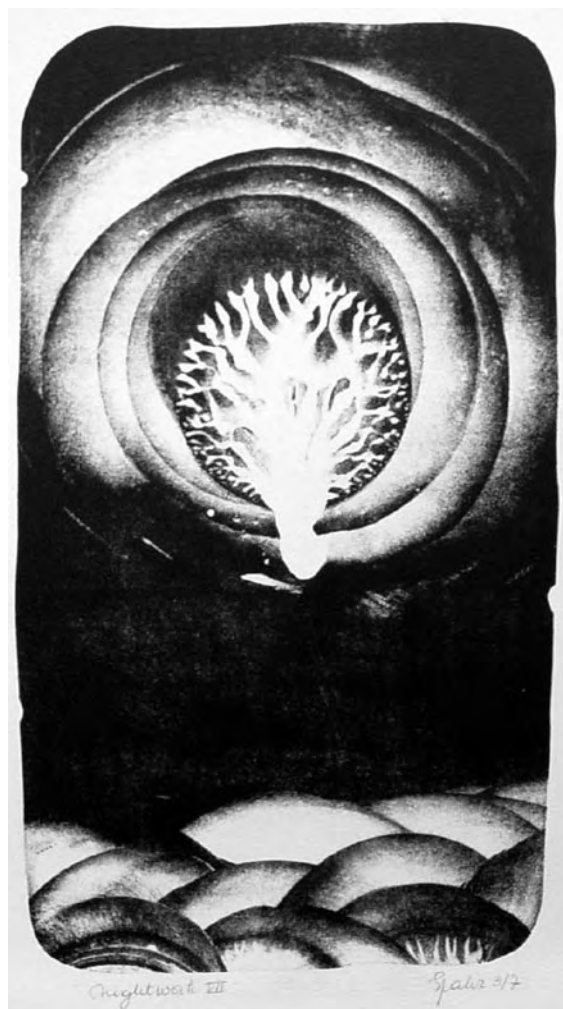
Independent printmakers only gradually become familiar with the encrypted wisdom stored in the matrix, a kind of knowing that cannot be acquired directly or instantly from textbooks or teachers. Artist's insights are born amidst the sweat and smells of the studio, ideas still encrusted with ink, reflections clinging to copper, thought that is etched ever so slowly into the artist's imagination.

In his biography of William Blake, Peter Ackroyd has pointed out that Blake's habit of practicing reversed writing (so that the engraved words would read forward in print) left its legacy in his work: "It is perhaps not unreasonable that a man who can write fluently in both directions might be intrigued by the concepts of *oppositions* and *contraries*."² And indeed, in discussing the structure of *The Song of Los*, Ackroyd speaks of Blake's "obsession for reversals and *contraries*."³ That, of course, is the Grail at the end of the journey, the transformation of a circuitous, tortuous, and demanding medium into a source of inspiration and insight, a world of re-

calcitrant matter transfigured into a work of art. A master print so entwines the language of the artist and the vocabulary of the print, that the work, if uprooted, would not survive the transfer into another medium. From this point of view, the long peregrination involving the manufacture of a matrix and the rigors of proofing and editioning, exposes the artist to a wealth of strange, unfamiliar, unpredictable substances and procedures, unquarried wisdom still entombed in mute matter. In describing his love and interest for this bristling world of inanimate substances, Bolton Brown aptly

refers to the Greek myth about the legendary giant Antaeus: in his famous battle with Hercules he was invincible as long as he would be able to touch the earth.⁴ The indirect process of making a print is responsible for forcing the artist into such close contact with the earth—an extremely direct and intimate experience that outshines the simplicity of pencil onto paper, brush onto linen. Each step in the making of a lithograph can be a source of inspiration, from the levigator's swirling universes of grit as you grind off the image, to the accidental printing of the limestone's edge.

It is strange that one would forego these magnificent moments, those fireflies that announce new work. After all, an alchemist who labors at transmuting lead into gold in his laboratory would not think of outsourcing the most promising and rewarding part of his quest. What would have been the fate of Rembrandt's plate *The Tree Crosses*



Nightwork VII, 2001, levigator lithograph, 19" x 11"

in the hands of a professional printer?

The arts are often celebrated because they have not yet fallen prey to the division of labor. Especially the discipline of printmaking allows the artist to inhabit a wide sprawling range of identities—he is not only a skillful laborer, obsessive craftsman and connoisseur of inks, but also an innovative experimenter, acid observer, an ethereal, gossamer sprite. The coalescing of such widely opposing roles and identities is a necessary accomplishment for a printmaker who, to quote from Hamlet, must indeed "by indirections find directions out."⁵

I grind my stones on our back patio. The graining table is in the shade of a tall black alder. I put on my red rubber boots, my butcher's apron, and line up my tools: snakeslip, files, straightedge, the jars with carborundum grit, squeegee, sponge, the calipers. My levigator is a heavy steel disk with an offset brass handle, a most awkward tool until you learn how to twirl it in circles across the smooth lime, a skater on ice.

How do you explain that moment when, unexpectedly, you look at a familiar world with different eyes? In the summer of 2001 I found myself graining and regaining lithographic stones with the levigator, but not in order to efface the surface and get rid of the old image. Instead, I had started to use the levigator as a drawing tool, with the whirling patterns of sludge and grit as my vocabulary. Printmakers are in the salvage business. Aside from the benefit of multiplication, the indirect process allows us to preserve impressions that could otherwise not be realized on paper. Our loot is derived from a limitless world of substances, textures, objects, all leaving a permanent trace in the print. We preserve relics, testimony from a world that only exists by the grace of the printmaker catching its imprint.

This too was worthy of preservation. The traces left by the levigator in the process of erasing the image were themselves images of indigenous strength and purpose. In the wake of this spinning disk, the slurry of grit, lime and water transfigured into speeding universes of swirling, gyrating worlds.

The wheeling pattern of limestone stars, a stony field of billowing waves—with a sweep of the disk they were born and then gone.

Slowly slanting the levigator away from the stone would give rise to flamboyant fractal trees that stood blazing white in the midst of these orbiting worlds. I learned how to draw trees that summer, singular shapes that express the force of attraction between disk and stone. These stony apparitions could never be realized directly on paper. Evanescent and fragile, they could only survive in translation, with the original work turned back to dust.

I spent a long season working with the same stone. All of it was new. How to control the right amount of grit. How

much water to achieve that perfect slurry. How to get the stone with dried sludge intact to the press. What kind of cardboard to ink up and place on top of the stone. And finally the most unpredictable and often heartbreaking moment: how much pressure to apply to avoid crushing the unborn image. My booty that summer was a suite of seven lithographs, a thin portfolio with one image for each of the sizes of grit used to achieve a perfectly polished stone. I called it *Nightwork*.⁶

There are parts of the soul one can only access in the midst of newness, pushed by experiences beyond the brain's grasp. Choosing a medium that is quick and easy is like grabbing an extra short pole to make the record vault.

Antaeus finally lost his great fight when Hercules succeeded in lifting him up from the earth. This is the age-old battle between matter and spirit. There is no such thing as the spirit. We mortals can know it only indirectly, if captured and concealed in earthly

matter. That soul in the midst of flight needs the artist's hand to give it wings.



Nightwork III, 2001, levigator lithograph, 19" x 11"

NOTES

¹ For a thorough discussion of the German or Italian origins of the tone woodblock, see David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print, 1470–1550* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1994) pp. 273–281.

² Akroyd, Peter, *Blake* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1996) p. 56.

³ Akroyd, p. 186.

⁴ Adams, Clinton, *Crayonstone. The Life and Work of Bolton Brown with a Catalogue of His Lithographs*. (University of New Mexico Press: Albuquerque, 1993) p. 85.

⁵ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*. Act II, Scene I.

⁶ Spahr, Herlinde, *Nightwork. A Portfolio of Seven Levigator Lithographs. With an Introduction by the Artist* (Lithium Press: Orinda, 2001).

CONTRIBUTORS

YUJI HIRATSUKA was born in Osaka, Japan. He studied at Tokyo Gakugei (Teacher's University) and graduated in 1978 with a BS in Art Education. He holds his MA from New Mexico State and his MFA/Printmaking from Indiana University. Yuji has been an Associate Professor at Oregon State University since 1992. He has also taught at Indiana University in Bloomington; DePauw University in Greencastle; and Colorado College in Colorado Springs. Every summer he conducts week-long printmaking workshops teaching Japanese water-based woodcuts and color intaglio printmaking at the Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland and the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology in Otis, Oregon. Yuji's work has been extensively exhibited in the US and abroad, winning numerous prestigious awards. His work is in the collections of The British Museum, Cincinnati Art Museum, Portland Art Museum and the New York Public Library, among others.

DAVID SMITH-HARRISON was born in 1959 in Salt Lake City, Utah and now lives and works in Richmond, California. His work is inspired by his interest in plants, trees, and architecture, as well as the artwork of fellow artists, past and present. His travels to many parts of the world have provided extensive resources for his art work, which has been exhibited internationally in solo shows, invitationals, and juried group exhibitions. A partial list of public collections includes the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Long Beach Museum of Art, Cleveland Museum of Art, Springfield Museum of Art, and Tama University Art Museum in Tokyo. More biographical information and images are available at www.DSHprintmaker.com.

ANDREW RAFTERY is a printmaker specializing in narrative engravings of contemporary American life. His work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions across the United States and is in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Fogg Art Museum, the Yale University Art Gallery, and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. In 2001, Raftery received the

Fritz Eichenberg Fellowship in Printmaking from the Rhode Island State Council of the Arts and was a 2003 recipient of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award. He is represented by Mary Ryan Gallery in New York. In his position as Associate Professor of Printmaking at Rhode Island School of Design, he has had many opportunities to collaborate with The RISD Museum on exhibitions and related educational programs.

Born in Antwerp, Belgium, **HERLINDE SPAHR** came to the University of California at Berkeley to pursue a degree in Comparative Literature. In the early eighties her favorite medium of expression became stone lithography, the result of a chance discovery of litho stones and an old Griffin press at the ASUC Studio on campus. In her book, *Open Studio: Work from 1977 to 1997* (Lithium Press: 1997) she notes: "The medium of lithography is dust, the petrified dust of a time when the first birds were taking flight into the sky... In a world of shifting values, changing perspectives, refracting visions... what greater teacher than this silent substance, hard and stubborn as stone and yet so exquisitely sensitive that it can record a breath of air." Spahr's work can be found in major public collections and it is included in the book *The Best of Printmaking: An International Collection*. She has previously published two other essays on the nature of printmaking in *The California Printmaker, About Reversals in Printmaking* (May 1998) and *Of Pressure and Printmaking* (October 2000) www.HerlindeSpahr.com.

MARY B. MOORHEAD is a syndicated newspaper columnist, licensed psychotherapist, and consultant specializing in aging and eldercare. She holds a BA in Art, with a concentration in drawing and etching, from UC Berkeley and an MS in Clinical Psychology. An avid collector of modern and contemporary etchings and lithographs, she is a member of the Board of Directors of the Achenbach Graphic Arts Council, which supports the Prints & Drawings Department of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. More information is available at www.eldercarecolumn.com.



California
Society of
Printmakers

P.O. Box 475422
San Francisco
California 94147

Web
caprintmakers.org

Email
caprintmaker@yahoo.com

Phone
415.905.4296

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BERKELEY, CA
PERMIT NO. 855