

AMERICAN COLOR PRINT EXHIBITION

January 8 Through February 6, 1933



"FLIGHT INTO EGYPT"
By Mons Breidvik
(Wood Cut)

WITH the showing of prints in color assembled by the Brooklyn Museum after a search throughout the country's exhibitions, we have one of the largest collections of American Color Prints of our time. This was due to the efforts of the Curator of Prints, Miss Susan A. Hutchinson.

While this fascinating medium is coming more and more into its own, it is fitting we should go over the slight information obtainable from the history of the past pathfinders leading up to the present showing. The idea started with the embellishment of manuscripts, such as those before Gutenberg, in 1468. The monks frequently printed a red letter or a frontispiece in tones of brown ink from an engraved wood block or stencil.

About 1530, Antonio De Trento, a pupil of Parmegiano, disappeared from the artist's studio, carrying with him sketches and

plates. A few years later, under the name of Fantine, these appeared in Paris and were among the first published etchings with color suggestion. Combinations of etching, engraving and wood block were used by Le Sueur and Bloemart of Holland about 1600. According to Papillon some of these prints were printed by Lalarme, whose press had three tables, six rollers, and required four men to work it. Each of the three blocks were inked by a different man, and the fourth man turned the handle and gave the simultaneous impression. Both press and prints were too expensive to prove profitable. This was the forerunner of J. Christopher Le Blond's tri-color process, which is represented in the Collection of Albert H. Wiggin. The production of line engraving was one of the least practised of all the color printing processes. A Dutchman and friend of Rembrandt, Hercules Seghers, 1625-1679, was one of the first to practice it. The work upon inspection has a single-printed color with a sort of grain. Lastman's studies appeared in London about 1750. He was also known to Rembrandt, who must have become familiar with the first rudiments of the color print about ten years before his death.

Some of these London prints show how these processes were brought to England together with the methods of Le Blond, Bartolozzi, and others who gave the Italian method of Chiarascuro to engraving and mezzotint. Aquatint was introduced in London at the time when Indian ink or sepia was



"WISTON RIVER"
By Frank Morley Fletcher
(Wood Cut)

so prevalent as a neutral tint. With the advent of Savage, and Baxter closely following, we begin the forty years of wood and stone, which gave so many beautiful color prints to the 18th century. These first prints were designed purely for reproduction. Savage was convinced that his prints would reproduce water colors and crayon drawings to perfection. Baxter firmly believed he would approximate the quality of oil painting. With the introduction of aquatint, the hand colored print was greatly aided, and much stipple work was also done at this time in imitation of the Sanguine drawings.

Baxter claimed in his patents that his steel plates and wood blocks were the basis of his invention. Rowlandson, 1756-1827 (and the Cruikshanks), did do a great deal of book illustration in which color was used. Hogarth took to wood engraving and brought back the sombre atmosphere of black and white. William Mallard W.

Turner, 1775-1851, in his "Liber Studiorum," etched and engraved most of the plates. The mezzotinting and color was by his assistants. Blake used color to embellish his text and a few Rare Editions contain red and gold illustrations. They are partly hand colored. Among the objects that attracted the public, by reason of color, were the lottery tickets, ornamented cheques, and sewing boxes, besides the more important development of illustrated books. Up to the time of the great exposition of 1851, the hand press alone was used. Colored mezzotints achieved great popularity in reproducing the Old Masters.

In France when Impressionism lightened the palettes of the men who are now considered its leaders, Camille Pissarro (1830 to 1903), experimented with a few etchings in color. Mary Cassatt, the American artist, who spent most of her life in France, also introduced color in her plates of mothers and chil-



"CIRCUS"
By Kenneth Hartwell
(Lithograph)



"HARBOR SCENE"
By William Meyerowitz
(Etching)

dren. In America we had the Currier & Ives prints, the combined work of several lithographers. This exhibition afforded us some highlights on the present status of this very interesting subject. We have almost every variety of print in color here. Very wisely they were arranged according to the mediums, including Etching in color, Mezzotint and Aquatint, Lithography and Woodcut. We are able to compare the exquisite preciousness of the etchings with the posteresque and decorative qualities of the lithographs and woodcuts.

Arthur B. Davies is represented by three prints in his very artistic manner. They are aquatints in toned inks, and recall Oriental art in their two-dimensional aspect. "Amber Garden" has poetic feeling.

One striking fact becomes clearer to us, as we compare the old and new, and that is the increasing desire of the artist to bring his print to a higher artistic level. We must not forget that the public has been educated to black and white etching, and that the era of color is just beginning to come into its own, after having been lost to us for almost a century. In coming back to us again, it has collected all the art developments of the past and present decades. In the group of ten etchings by William Meyerowitz, we have original subject matter, and pioneer experiments which have made this artist's work unique in this medium.

The etching, "Modern New York," with its rays of light, motion and magnificent color, gives us a picture of our own day. "Girl Playing" has the significance of design underlying the Indian and Chinese art, subtly woven with

our western vision. "The Harbour" combines historic New England with the beauty of nature, ever the same, wherever the soul of the artist finds it.

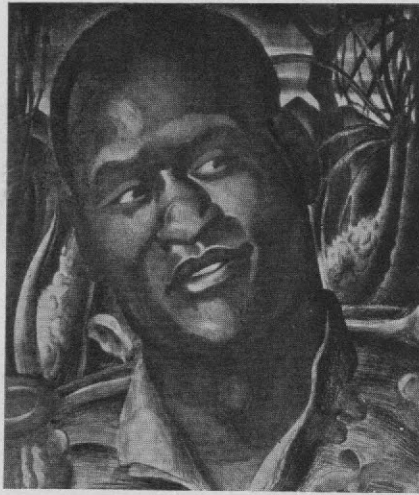
Other interesting groups are by Frank Nankivell, whose "Hikers" and "Wrestlers Going On" have subtle charm, Orville Peets with his "Catskill Vandoo" and Jerome Myers, whose "Old New York House" is in his well known manner. The etchings also include work by Kálmán Kubinyi, Gabrielle DeV. Clements's charming "Versailles," Ellen Day Hale's "Megiddo from Nazareth," John Taylor Arms, Wuanita Smith, Clarence Holbrook Carter, Lesley Jackson, Anne Goldthwaite's "Cow and Calf."

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Wood, as was mentioned before, was one of the earliest mediums used in relation to prints. Early woodcuts were colored by hand, and the wood block was used to guide the colors.

To Jost de Necker, a Dutchman, is given credit for the use of blocks to superimpose one color on another in 1508. The earliest color print in the Orient was found in a Chinese book dated 1625. The Japanese kept the art pure from the earliest part of the Eighteenth Century until about sixty years ago. Some manner of crude block prints were also found there dated 770 A.D. The first books were all hand printed from beech board wood blocks.

Albert Dürer was the glory of wood cutting. He designed many of his works between the years 1492-1528. The sixteen scenes from the Apocalypse, the larger and smaller Passions of which there are about thirty-seven were magnificent examples of this



"PAUL ROBESON AS EMPEROR JONES"
By Mabel Dwight
(Lithograph)

medium. Hans Holbein's "Dance of Death" is an unusual work printed in 1538 in which the engravings are only three inches in size. In many of these latter works color was actually employed, although tinted paper, and inks with both red and orange content were used.

Mention should be made of Arthur W. Dow, who did much to popularize the wood block print in America. The prints by Gustave Baumann in this exhibit are outstanding for their completeness and delightful technique. "Idle Fleet" is an example of the lightness he can obtain without losing the essentials of his medium. Morley Fletcher in "Mount Shasta" and "Wiston River" quite expertly presents the delicate perfection to which the relief process can be brought. The joy of nature is felt in the work of Frances Gearhart and Margaret Patterson. Japanese influence is apparent in the work of Ambrose Patterson, Wm. Rice, H. Dean Lang and Lilian Miller.

There are five exquisite prints by Max Weber. Also with great artistic vibration those are by A. Walkowitz in "Holiday Group," and Karl Knaths' "Barn Interior." Ernest W. Watson and Tod Lindenmuth exhibit fine examples of their art. Rudolph Ruzicka has especial skill with the graver, as have Allen Lewis and Walter J. Phillips in "Mamalilicoola, B. C." and the "York Boat on Lake Winnipeg," gives a fine decorative element.

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A small gallery has been devoted to the Lithographs. Johann Senefelder, the inventor of lithography, in 1818, predicted the following in his notes, "The manner of printing in different colours is capable of such a degree of perfection, that I have no doubt perfect paintings will one day be produced by it." This gives us the clue as to what Senefelder intended his invention to do, and being a comparatively recent development it has done much for the art of reproduction. True lithography is produced on stone, and is actually a drawing with crayon fixed on the stone by a weak acid solution.

In our present day American group we have Pop Hart's "Mexican Orchestra." Mabel Dwight, whose subject of French life are amusing, also gives us "Paul Robeson as Emperor Jones"; Rockwell Kent with "Sermilik Fjord, Alaska," and "Wayside Madonna," a metal cut; Isami Doi's "Red Beret," which is a linoleum cut, and Ernest Fiene's "White Roses"; Emil Ganso's "Cooper's Lake," a fine example of lithography. There is also a stencil print by Thomas Cleland.

It seems that events come in cycles, and every country has had

an era of color printing. The American Color print may have profited by the art of all nations, but it also has something very definitely of its own to say. It is encouraging to have the Brooklyn

Museum show the consummation of these efforts and there are hopeful signs that other museums are inclined to give further encouragement to this medium.

T. F. B.

CRITICS' COMMENTS ON THE WATER COLOR SHOW

THE interesting and varied reactions inspired by the Seventh Biennial Water Color Show are indicated by the following excerpts. At the same time was shown the Fifteenth Annual Exhibition of the Brooklyn Society of Miniature Painters. Three prominent critics expressed themselves thus:

Henry McBride in the *New York Sun*, January 28, 1933:

"Germany steals all the honors that the occasion offers. The German artists are not internationally known, but there seems to be no reason why they shouldn't be. Given a few more exhibitions such as this one, and soon we shall all be able to be quite glib with the names of Otto Lange, August Lenhard, Paul Wilhelm, Constantin von Mitzsche-Collande, Heinrich Burkhardt and possibly Wilhelm Heckrott, Fritz Beckert and Rolf Tillmann. As it is, I think I have got Otto Lange's name permanently fixed in my memory. He is the most stylish of the group. His views of Venice and of certain harbors have a charming whimsicality in the touch, a whimsicality that relates in a vague way to Paul Klee. It is only in the touch, however, for Herr Lange sticks fairly closely to the facts that Paul Klee flies so far away from.

"We seem to think that the other

fellow is always right, and so if a new genius pops up in France shoals of young American painters straightway adopt the new man's manner in toto. It ought, of course, to be a punishable offense, and as a matter of fact, in the long run, the sinner is sufficiently convicted of his sin. But you don't find the Germans erring in this direction. There are no little Cézannes, little Renoirs, little Matisse among them. All along the line, if not brilliance, then you find competence and an easy, pleasant relationship with nature."

Margaret Breuning in the *New York Evening Post*, January 28, 1933:

"The interest centers upon the American section, which sustains the spotlight thrown upon it very ably with wide topographical ramifications and an astonishingly diversified subject matter drawn from all quarters of the globe. When art settles down to the recent "Buy American" slogan, as it were, there will be perhaps as excellent work, but certainly not as much piquancy of pictorial subjects.

"There are a number of pictures which have an amusing content, a gay, witty comment upon the thing seen presented with lightness of touch and a deft humorous connotation. The character of the