Recent Accessions: Prints

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The accession policy of the Print Department is inevitably a fairly straightforward affair. There are certain gaps in the collections which must be filled as time goes on, and of course smaller lacunae in areas where we are already strong. The normal routine, however, is constantly enlivened by two unknown factors. One arises from the unpredictability of the print market: every now and then something will turn up that is so rare or extraordinary that one could never have hoped to find it. The second and perhaps even more important unknown is the constant flow of widely varying gifts and bequests.

The riches that result from these imponderables are well illustrated by even a few of the more interesting accessions of the past year. A glance at these also indicates the wide and wonderful range of a catholic collection of printed pictures: we pass from a moving religious image to a book jacket, from a rare book to a cartoon; we survey the products of five centuries.

Our earliest accession in this group, dating probably from the 1470s, is a superb impression of the Ecce Homo from Martin Schongauer’s famed Passion series. Schongauer was the first noted painter who was also a printmaker. His reputation and his style spread rapidly through his prints; there is, for example, the well-known but still touching story of how the young Dürer made a long journey to study with the master, only to find on arrival that he had just died.

One of Schongauer’s closest followers and pupils was the Master A.G., whose work on occasion shows a surprising degree of originality and independence from the strong personality of his teacher. This is particularly true of the Passion series which he executed perhaps a decade after his master’s. Among the numerous recent gifts of Harry G. Friedman is a very fine impression of the first state of the Entombment from this later series.

The next generation of German artists was...
more susceptible to the increasing influence from the south. Perhaps the most Italianate of them all was Hans Burgkmair the Elder, who worked for the Emperor Maximilian in Augsburg. The Print Department has now acquired through the Anne and Carl Stern Fund one of his greatest woodcuts: the Crucifixion made for the Freising Missal of 1502. It is a brilliant impression on vellum with unusually fresh and lovely contemporary coloring.

From Italy at about the same time comes an unusual Nativity scene by the little-known Master I.I.Ca. Scholarly controversy as to the identity of the artist whose known oeuvre consists of a mere two engravings signed with this monogram goes back to the late eighteenth century. It is now more or less agreed that he was a member of the Campagnola family who, like his better-known relatives, worked in the long shadow of Mantegna. That Italy received something from Germany in return for the renaissance ideas she exported is evidenced by the menagerie of small creatures in the foreground which are almost certainly derived from Albrecht Dürer’s early prints.

A copy of the original 1567 Bruges edition of Aesop’s Fables, with 108 etched illustrations by Marcus Gheeraerts, is of particular interest. Gheeraerts, who deserves to be much better known as a printmaker, was one of the finest animal draftsmen of all time; his plates, though obviously based on painstaking studies from life, are infused with great spontaneity and humor. The book was a tremendous success and its illustrations were copied in many later editions, most notably perhaps by Wenzel Hollar for Ogilby’s Aesop of 1665.

Another work by a late sixteenth-century Netherlandish artist is the Saint John the Baptist by Hendrick Goltzius, perhaps the best known and certainly the most stylish printmaker of his time. It is the first state of a chiaroscuro woodcut printed from the key or line block only, without the two tone blocks.

In addition to his many woodcuts and wood engravings, Goltzius engraved a number of portraits on small silver medals. These may have inspired his somewhat younger fellow countryman Simon van de Passe to create a portrait medal of James I, Anne, and Prince Charles, with a shield on the reverse. Though such medals were made as ornaments and not as printing plates, impressions of them were taken from the beginning. Our impressions of the van de Passe medal were presumably printed sometime in the eighteenth century.

Anna Hyatt Huntington has recently given us another memento of the young prince in this portrait, who of course became the ill-fated Charles I. Her gift is the dedication copy of La Serre’s Le Miroir qui ne fléche point (Brussels, 1632), in an extremely elaborate embroidered binding with inset miniatures on vellum of Charles and his queen, Henrietta Maria. This extraordinary volume, apparently presented to Charles after he assumed the throne, contains six beautifully colored engravings by Cornelis Galle after Nicolaes van der Horst; perhaps the most striking of them is the portrait of Henrietta Maria (illustrated on page 214) with its elaborate ornamental frame.

Another such frame, though this time in the style of the eighteenth century, is a dominant feature of the charming drawing of ornament by Gilles Marie Oppenord, given by Janos Scholz. Oppenord, a pupil of J. H. Mansart, was the favorite architect and decorator of the Regent, the Duke of Orléans. The rich yet light and elegant fantasy revealed in the drawing is the essence of his art and the quality that marks him as one of the creators of the rococo style.

The life lived in rooms like those designed by Oppenord is represented in the aquatint Le Déjeuner Anglais, which came to us by bequest of Ella Morris de Peyster. This estampe galante is by Géraud Vidal after a gouache by Lavrience. Vidal, thoroughly aware of the commercial value of his work, used an advertisement in a fashionable journal to urge that “every amateur should hasten to collect the full set” of his remarkable plates, and numerous collectors ever since have done his bidding.

William Blake, born a mere fifteen years later than Vidal, quite clearly belonged to a different world. Though his strange visions are often even more confusing to the modern eye than they were to his contemporaries, he remains a truly great illustrator. His stature is demonstrated by a monumental colored print finished in pen which is the gift of Mrs. Robert W. Goelet. It is
Ecce Homo, by Martin Schongauer (1445–1491?). Height 6\(\frac{3}{4}\) inches

Whittelsey Fund, 1958
The Entombment, by the Master A. G. (active 1480–1490). Height 5 3/4 inches
Gift of Harry G. Friedman, 1957

The Nativity, by the Master I. I. Ca. (active about 1500). Height 10 3/4 inches
Whittelsey Fund, 1958
LEFT: *The Crucifixion*, by Hans Burgkmair (1473–1531). *Height 10 ¾ inches*
Anne and Carl Stern Fund, 1958

RIGHT: *Saint John the Baptist*, by Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617). *Height 9 ¾ inches*
Whitelsey Fund, 1958

*The Smith and His Dog*, by Marcus Gheeraerts (1510?–1590?). *Height 7 ¾ inches*
Whitelsey Fund, 1958
Portrait of Queen Henrietta Maria, engraved by Cornelis Galle (1615–1678). Height 7 inches
Gift of Anna Hyatt Huntington, 1937
Le Déjeuner Anglais, by Géraud Vidal (1742–1801). Height 11 3/4 inches
Bequest of Ella Morris de Peyster, 1958

Ornament drawing, by Gilles Marie Oppenord (1672–1742). Height 7 3/4 inches
Gift of Janos Scholz, 1958
Two silhouettes of the family of Count von Loewenstein of Riga, by Peter Ernst Rockstuhl (1764–1824). Height 14 3/4 inches
Mary Martin Fund, 1958

Fireworks, by Honoré Daumier (1808–1879). Height 9 3/8 inches
Gift of Richard S. Hirschland, 1957
Pity, by William Blake (1757–1827). Height 16 ¾ inches

Gift of Mrs. Robert W. Goelet, 1958
Les Écrevisses à Longchamps, by Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863). Height 7 3/8 inches
Whittelsey Fund, 1958

Chevaux d’Auvergne, by Théodore Géricault (1791–1824). Height 10 3/8 inches
Gift of Mrs. Edwin de T. Bechtel

Bequest of Clifford A. Furst
L'Art Celeste, by Odilon Redon (1840–1916).  
Height 12 3/8 inches  
Gift of A. W. Bahr, 1958

Potiphar’s Wife, by Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881–1919).  
Height 15 3/8 inches  
Gift of Sadie and Bruno Adriani, 1958

Another and totally different aspect of eighteenth-century art appears in two silhouette portraits of the family of Count von Loewenstern, by Peter Ernst Rockstuhl, a German artist who worked in Eastern Europe and Russia. Not only unusually fine as silhouettes, they are remarkable in that they are signed and dated 1785, are still in their original frames, and remained in the Loewenstern family until the 1920s. In short, they are admirable additions to our remarkably fine and extensive collections of this delightful if minor art. They are purchases from the Mary Martin Fund.

The nineteenth-century acquisitions illustrated here are all examples of the then new art of lithography. Delacroix is the author of *Les Ecrevisses à Longchamps*, one of a series of ten lithographic caricatures executed and published between 1816 and 1822. Prints were not a major part of Delacroix’s art, for while he made almost a thousand paintings and over eight thousand drawings, he produced only about a hundred and twenty-five lithographs and etchings. He later lamented these, complaining of “much time lost in little things,” and with few exceptions his lithographs have not been highly regarded by most later critics. Nevertheless The Crayfish is of more than a little interest. Delacroix was the greatest master before Daumier to turn the new art of lithography to caricature, and he did so here with considerable technical success. (The top-hatted spectator at the left, incidentally, seems to be a self-portrait of the young artist.)

A rare first state (before a crack in the stone) of the lithograph Chevaux d’Auvergne by Géricault was included in a handsome gift of prints by Mrs. Edwin de T. Bechtel. The greater part of Géricault’s less than a hundred lithographs deal with equestrian subjects; taken together they form one of the finest series of portraits of horses in the history of art. Chevaux d’Auvergne is for the *Études de Chevaux Lithographiés* published in Paris by Gihaut in 1822. Though this is a mere five years and some forty prints after his first essay in the new medium, he had obviously mastered it completely.

Our collection of Daumiers, so greatly enriched by the Edwin de T. Bechtel bequest just last year, is now enhanced by the gift of four superb lithographic proofs, from Richard S. and Herbert E. Hirschland. All date from the 1840s and are in the extremely rare first states before all letter, with the inscriptions hand-lettered in ink. The proof of Fireworks illustrated here was for a series of Family Customs, and was later published in both *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari*.

Odilon Redon was one of the great masters of lithography in the latter part of the century. His *L’Art Celeste*, executed in 1894, was included in a generous gift of prints by the late A. W. Bahr. Redon had been a musician and turned to lithography at the urging of his friend Fantin-Latour. While there may be a certain parallel between the fin de siècle aspects of his art and those of Blake’s in the preceding century, Redon was more a dreamer of very personal dreams than a visionary. He agreed with Poe that all certainty is in dreams, and the haunting beauty of his particular dreams has made him increasingly popular through the years.

Redon’s brilliant younger contemporary Toulouse-Lautrec found time during his intense and brief career to produce a number of programs, menus, book jackets, and the like, in addition to his famous posters. Perhaps the finest example of this phase of his work is his cover for *Au pied du Sinai* (1898); this grand barren landscape raised book-jacket design to a level hardly achieved before or since. The Museum has received an unfolded proof impression of the second state of this lithograph, along with other prints by Toulouse-Lautrec, in a bequest of Clifford A. Furst.

From the early twentieth century comes Potiphar’s Wife, by Wilhelm Lehmbruck, whose career was almost as tragically brief as that of Toulouse-Lautrec—he committed suicide at the age of thirty-eight. This signed impression of the etching, done in Paris in 1911, is the gift of Sadie and Bruno Adriani. Lehmbruck’s style, though somewhat apart from the main stream of German expressionism, marks a fascinating and highly individual chapter in modern art.

Thus coincidentally, we close as we began with an intaglio print of a Biblical subject by a German artist—which may or may not be taken to indicate a reassuring continuity in the course of artistic endeavor.