

Pressing Images:

prints from Exeter's fine art collection

The art collection at RAMM is rich and varied. It consists of over 7,000 paintings, prints, drawings, watercolours, miniatures and sculptures dating from the 1400s to the present day. The collection includes donations from individuals, bequests and purchases.

In our image-saturated world, it is hard to imagine a time when pictures were all unique and limited to specific places. Such uniqueness restricted access to the privilege of the wealthy and educated members of society. The technological revolution that introduced the printing press to Europe, and the increased availability of cheap paper allowed knowledge and images to be shared on a scale previously unseen. This exhibition explores the history of printed images from the 16th century to contemporary art as told through the collection at RAMM.

Printmaking began in China around the 9th century when images were produced through woodblock printing. The introduction of the printing press in Europe happened several centuries later, around 1450. This allowed images to be mass-produced, making them easily accessible and affordable for the first time.

Two main printmaking techniques developed during the first three centuries: relief and intaglio, which respectively used woodblocks and metal plates as surfaces. However, from the 18th century onwards, new techniques and materials, such as aquatint, lithography and screenprinting, began to be invented and used. Many artists explored the full potential of these techniques, dramatically influencing artistic production and generating a revolutionary period in the history of art. This exhibition focuses on the technological and artistic evolution of printmaking. It demonstrates its crucial role in spreading images and ideas in an accessible way.

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(You will never get crabs to walk forwards)

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Common quaker moth

The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace

16th-17th Century

The transformative effect of printing technology on European art in the early 16th century was driven largely by the influence of several seminal artists, most of whom originally trained as goldsmiths. Engraving initially developed in central Europe and took root in England only in the mid-16th century.

One of the leading artists of the printmaking revolution was the German painter and printmaker Albrecht Dürer. Born in Nuremberg in 1471, he became one of the most famous artists of the Northern Renaissance. He produced woodcuts, etchings and engravings depicting images of religion, history, mythology and portraiture. Dürer was one of the first to become a truly international artist with his ability to produce visually appealing prints that were disseminated across Europe.

Since the dawn of printmaking, the medium allowed the circulation of both religious and secular images. The French engraver Jacques Callot produced many series representing feathered nobility and the poor. Rembrandt and Adriaen van Ostade etched scenes from the Bible and everyday life. Numerous early prints quickly became iconic and continued to inspire other artists for centuries.

Crucifixion with the Virgin and St John

Lambrecht Hopfer (active about 1525-1550)

after Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)

1520-1550, etching on paper

Hopfer's father, Daniel (1471-1536), the first artist to etch on iron to make prints. Hopfer used his father's invention of etching to copy Dürer's engraving, *Crucifixion*, from the 16-plate series *The Engraved Passion*. David Funck (1642-1709) acquired many plates from the Hopfer family and republished them. He added the number '182' in the lower margin.

Hopfer made several accurate, but inexpensive, reproductive prints during his life, many of which are after Dürer's work. This demonstrates the popularity of Dürer's prints and how Hopfer made them accessible and affordable for everyone by reproducing them.

The Virgin and the Child with St Anne

After Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)

After 1500, engraving on paper

The composition of this print is unusual. The artist has chosen to place the Virgin with her back to the viewer while Saint Anne is depicted facing directly forwards. This draws attention to the tender touch to the Christ Child's head by his grandmother. This print is not by Dürer. It is copied from his work where the figures are reversed, with the Virgin and Child on the right and Saint Anne on the left.

The inclusion of Dürer's signature shows the commercial popularity of these kinds of devotional images, with many artists making copies, often trying to disguise their prints as originals from Dürer's workshop.

Adam and Eve

After Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)

After 1504, engraving on paper

This engraving, a deceptive later copy of Dürer's original, demonstrates the artist's fascination with ideal form. Adam and Eve are positioned symmetrically in a dark German forest, instead of from the garden described in Genesis. Adam, resembling the Hellenistic Apollo Belvedere, reveals Dürer's exposure to ancient art seen through drawings.

By this date, Dürer's engraving mastery is clear, intricately detailing human, animal and plant textures. The mountain ash symbolises the Tree of Life and the fig the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. Animals represent medieval temperaments, aligning with Dürer's cultural pride and Italian influences, blending German identity with the classical tradition.

Nunquam efficies ut recte incedant cancri

(You will never get crabs to walk forwards)

Jacob Hoefnagel (1575 until about 1630)

after Joris Hoefnagel (1542-1600)

1592, engraving on paper

This engraving is the sixth plate from a series of botanical prints, *Archetypa studiaeque patris Georgi Hoefnageli*, engraved by Jacob Hoefnagel after his father's watercolours. It belongs to the florilegium genre, which emerged in the 16th century as a collection of botanical prints aimed at plant enthusiasts, artists, and lovers of curiosities.

Originally popular in Europe, florilegia gained traction in Britain when artists migrated from the Low Countries. Initially for wealthy collectors, these prints became widely used, serving as patterns for embroidery, leather decoration, and wallpaper.

The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace

Attributed to Jost Amman (artist, 1471-1528)
monogrammist SHF (block-cutter, active about 1564)
and Sigmund Feyerabend (publisher, 1528-90)
1569-79, woodcut on paper

This woodcut print is a modern impression of the 16th-century woodblock displayed in the case to your left. It is from a book (*Newe Biblische Figuren*) of 201 illustrations depicting Old and New Testament stories.

The artist, probably the German printmaker Jost Amman, depicted an episode from the Book of Daniel. Three Jewish men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, are thrown into a furnace by Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon, for refusing to bow to the king's image in the background.

However, the men are saved from harm by the angel behind them. Amman was one of the most prolific printmakers of its time.

Beggar Woman Leaning on a Staff Holding Rosary Beads

After Jacques Callot (1592–1635)
1622–23 or later, etching on paper

Old Beggar Woman Holding a Staff

Jacques Callot (1592–1635)
1622–23, etching on paper

Beggar Woman Holding a Stick and a Bowl

Jacques Callot (1592–1635)
1622–23, etching on paper

The first three prints are from the series *Les Mendiants*, representing beggars and poor people. Jacques Callot was one of the first artists to depict the poor, demonstrating that peasants and beggars are important subjects.

Gentleman in Fur-Trimmed Jacket and Plumed Hat with Sword

Jacques Callot (1592–1635)
1620–23, etching on paper squared for transfer or copy

The fourth etching is from the series *La Noblesse*, which possibly illustrates the costumes worn at the Lorraine Court, working as a counterpoint to *Les Mendiants*.

The subjects appear individually in both series, but the landscapes differ dramatically.

Callot's work influenced other artists. Rembrandt admired Callot's skill with the etching needle and was inspired by these prints for his own beggars. Callot's ability to capture a wide range of subjects and convey emotions through his prints has left a lasting legacy in the history of printmaking.

Mount Vesuvius

Theodor Matham (attributed engraver, 1605-76)
and Athanasius Kircher (artist, 1602-80)
1638, engraving on paper

On a visit to southern Italy in 1638, Kircher watched Vesuvius as it began to rumble and smoulder. Overcome by curiosity, he hiked to the rim of the active volcano. He later wrote, "When finally I reached the crater, it was terrible to behold. The whole area was lit up by the fires, and the glowing sulphur and bitumen produced an intolerable vapour. It was just like hell, only lacking the demons to complete the picture!"

From the 17th century, prints were increasingly used to document all the aspects of nature and science, both for specialists and for general audiences. This print is from *Mundus Subterraneus*.

The Anglers

After Adriaen van Ostade (1610-85)

About 1647, etching and drypoint on Japanese paper

Van Ostade focused on depicting heartwarming portrayals of Dutch peasants participating in social activities within village squares, inns or barns. This artwork faithfully reproduces Ostade's only piece where the landscape takes precedence over the characters. The etching skilfully conveys the tranquillity of a misty summer day through nuanced atmospheric effects. The scene exudes a reflective atmosphere of leisurely idleness, as seen in the elderly, stooped man leisurely trailing his fishing line in a shallow stream and the young boy patiently holding a basket in anticipation of elusive fish.

The Dentist

Jan Gillisz. van Vliet (1605-68)

1630-38, etching and engraving on paper

Van Vliet was a Dutch Golden Age printmaker and painter known for his detailed etchings, particularly those depicting people at work. This etching is from van Vliet's notable series of prints *The Trades*. Each print typically focuses on a specific trade, featuring skilled artisans and labourers engaged in their work.

The *Trades* series aligns with the broader trend in Dutch Golden Age art where genre scenes depicting everyday life became popular.

These works often celebrated the prosperity and diversity of Dutch society during this period.

18th–19th Century

Many new printmaking techniques evolved in the 18th and 19th centuries, including the development of wood engraving, lithography, photography and the means for introducing colour to prints. These advancements saw printmakers fully embrace the potential of prints as carriers of social commentary and critique to the masses, which had begun in the Reformation. William Hogarth championed this in the 18th century.

In the 19th century, the artist and satirist George Cruickshank took up that mantle and became known in his lifetime as the "modern Hogarth". His prints of royalty and aristocracy, with distinctively bright colours and exaggerated, often rather grotesque, features are still recognisable today.

Printmaking in this era was also used to disseminate an extensive range of subjects, from the worlds of royalty, politics, science, literature and the arts, to portraits of eminent military and naval figures. The Exeter-born engraver Samuel Cousins produced mezzotints of painted works by leading artists, such as Thomas Lawrence and Joshua Reynolds.

Significant developments in printmaking happened in the Eastern world as well.

From the late 18th century, it became possible to produce coloured single-sheet woodblock impressions. Coloured prints required multiple woodblocks that were printed in sequence to obtain layers of colour. In the Edo period in Japan (1603–1867), woodblock prints usually depicted Kabuki actors and courtesans, characterised by bold lines and a rich colour palette.

The Fellow Prentices at their Looms

William Hogarth (1697-1764)

1747, etching and engraving on paper

This print opens Hogarth's twelve-print series, *Industry and Idleness*. The set narrates the contrasting paths of hardworking and lazy apprentices, shaping their destinies in later life. Scriptural passages, mainly from Proverbs, accompany each scene. In this plate the industrious apprentice works while the idle apprentice faces the disapproval of his angered master.

Hogarth was aware of the role and impact that printmaking could play as an artistic medium. Therefore, he aimed to reach a broader audience by printing affordable copies on inexpensive paper available in all of London's print shops. By doing that, he appealed to a much broader market and helped prints to become respectable works of art in their own right.

Hudibras Triumphant

William Hogarth (1697-1764)

1726, etching and engraving on paper

Hogarth is renowned for his narrative paintings and prints that cleverly satirise and highlight his era's social and moral issues. Hogarth excelled in creating sequential narrative series, skilfully arranging figures and symbolic elements to convey stories.

Among his works is a set of twelve engravings illustrating the adventures of Hudibras, a bumbling adventurer from Samuel Butler's mock-heroic poem. Ridiculing the Puritan party's efforts during the Great Civil War of 1640, Butler's poem exposes the hypocrisy of the Presbyterians, Independents, and Zealots seeking leadership. In the scene depicted here, Hudibras demonstrates his determination by overcoming a menacing fiddle player and placing him in the stocks.

The Sleeping Congregation

William Hogarth (1697-1764)

1736; retouched 1762, etching and engraving on thick wove paper

Human frailty provided Hogarth with an endless source of humour. His incisive satires impart lessons through candid portrayals of people's shortcomings.

In this scene, a congregation nods off during a church service as the clergyman reads from the gospel.

The parish clerk in the centre stares at the exposed bosom of the sleeping woman on the right— his devotion displaced from the Virgin to the young woman. When Hogarth republished this plate in 1762 he added extra details including warts on the reader's face and cracks in the wall.

Bacchanal Children

Francesco Bartolozzi (1728-1815)
after Marcantonio Franceschini (1648-1729)
1765, etching and stipple on paper

In this print children are at play with a goat. The god Bacchus is sat facing backwards leaning on stones.

Bartolozzi was an Italian engraver famous for reproducing other artists' work with prints. Through reproduction, he critically reinterpreted those works, contributing to the circulation of the baroque and neoclassical taste. Bartolozzi gained recognition for his abilities as an engraver and was invited to work in England in the 1760s, where this print was made. He promoted the stipple technique, which involves creating images using dots rather than lines. This technique allowed for a softer and more delicate rendering of tones, making it well-suited for reproducing drawings and paintings.

Monstrosities of 1821

George Cruikshank (1792-1878)
1821, hand-coloured etching on paper

George Cruikshank was a master of satirical art, and much of his work focused on social and political commentary. In this etching people stroll through one of London's parks, showcasing extravagant fashions. The print perfectly embodies Cruikshank's style and his ability to capture the personalities and emotions of subjects from all walks of life. The etching is part of a series of eight plates begun by Cruikshank in 1816 to caricature the fashions of the day. His legacy endures through his works and his influence on the broader landscape of 19th-century illustration.

Portrait of Samuel Cousins

Samuel Cousins (1801-87)
after Edwin Long (1829-91)
1884, mezzotint on paper

Cousins produced dozens of portrait mezzotints during his career. This print, the last one he ever engraved, reproduces his portrait painted by Edwin Long. The print shows Cousins preparing a mezzotint plate by scraping it with a rocker. In the lower margin, other printmaking tools are visible, some of which can also be seen on display in this exhibition.

The original oil painting of this portrait is in the collection at RAMM and can be viewed on the Collections Explorer website <https://rammcollections.org.uk> .

A Midsummer Night's Dream: Bottom and Titania

Samuel Cousins (1801-87)

after Edwin Henry Landseer (1802-73)

1858, mezzotint and etching on paper

In this enchanting scene from Shakespeare's play, the fairy queen Titania affectionately leans on Bottom, a weaver with a magically bestowed ass's head. Within a woodland arbour, fairies and enchanted animals surround them, evoking a harem ambience through the queen's sheer attire and Bottom's Turkish slippers. Puck, the mischievous sprite, watches with glee from behind. He arranged this peculiar union at the request of the queen's enraged husband, Oberon.

Cousins expertly reproduced a painting by Edwin Landseer.

Queen Victoria praised the work as a 'gem, beautiful, fairy-like, and graceful.'

Muscipula

Samuel Cousins (1801-87)

after Joshua Reynolds (1723-92)

1879, mezzotint on paper

Cousins was celebrated for his mastery of mezzotint, a labour-intensive and intricate printmaking method. Cousins became one of the leading practitioners of this art form in the 19th century.

One of Cousins' primary contributions to printmaking was his ability to faithfully reproduce the works of prominent painters, like this print after a painting by Joshua Reynolds. His mezzotints helped to disseminate and popularise these artists' works to a broader audience.

A Kabuki Actor

Utagawa Kunihiro (1816-60)

1830-43, shini-e colour woodblock print on paper

The renowned Japanese Kabuki actor Ichikawa Ebijuro I (1777-1827) is portrayed in the guise of a samurai. This print celebrates his theatrical prowess and conveys the sombre information of Ichikawa's death in Osaka in 1827. Ichikawa was skilled in expansive tachimawari (combat scenes) and hayagawari (swift costume changes) techniques.

This print uses the revolutionary technique nishiki-e where multiple woodblocks apply different colours to a single print. The process allowed for a more extensive colour palette and increased the complexity of prints. The 18th-century developments in colour woodblock printing laid the groundwork for the golden age of ukiyo-e in the 19th century.

20th Century

With the invention of photography, the use of printmaking as a means of reproducing images of other works of art had become largely obsolete. Yet artists embraced printmaking with renewed creativity, combining modern techniques with traditional forms. Screen printing proved a particularly popular technique and continues to be used to create everyday printed items on fabric.

This selection of 20th-century prints from the collection at RAMM reflects this era of experimentation, especially during the second half of the century. During this time, printing techniques were refined and streamlined. More women turned to printmaking, becoming celebrated artists worldwide. One artist at the forefront of this was Devon-born Dorothea Wight, who set up Studio Prints in London in 1968, producing prints for leading artists such as Lucien Freud, Frank Auerbach and Paula Rego, as well as her own.

At the same time as this renewed period of creativity, many artists, like the Cornish artist Alan Richards, were drawn to religious subjects. This revival was less about the mass production and circulation of devotional images, as seen in the 16th century, and more about an exploration of faith through art that came in the decades immediately after the second world war.

The Tree of Life: The Tree of Seth

Alan Richards (born 1932)

1974-79, screen print on paper

The Tree of Life series of prints is typical of the post-Second World War revival of religious subjects. Richards borrows two 15th-century woodcuts from *The Legendary History of the Cross* (1483), a Dutch book containing 64 woodcuts published by Johann Veldener (born 1486-96).

The screen print illustrates the Tree of Seth from the story of the Tree of Life described in the Book of Genesis. The smaller woodcut depicts Seth planting a seed under Adam's tongue, while the larger shows that the tree has grown and taken root. Richards added a loose transcription of Bible verses and music notation in the background.

The Tree of Life: Solomon's Temple

Alan Richards (born 1932)

1974-79, screen print on paper

This print is the fourth in the series *The Tree of Life*. Just as in *The Tree of Seth*, Richards combines a 15th-century woodcut with handwritten text and music. The woodcut shows a view of Jerusalem taken from Hartmann Schedel's *Weltchronik* or *World Chronicle* (1493).

Bowled Over

Gavin Robbins (active 1960s)
and Ted Hughes (poet, 1930-98)
1967, coloured linocut on paper

This linocut and the following piece are from a compelling series made collaboratively by printmaker Gavin Robbins and renowned poet Ted Hughes. Originating during Robbins' student years, the prints were later compiled into a published book. Ted Hughes, acclaimed for masterpieces like *Crow*, *Wodwo*, and *Birthday Letters*, is acknowledged by literary scholars for his profound poetic contributions. Beyond his adult works, Hughes is also celebrated for his children's books.

Fern 1967

Gavin Robbins (active 1960s)
and Ted Hughes (poet, 1930-98)
1967, coloured linocut on Japanese paper

Au Bords du Bois

Paul Nash (1889-1946)
1921, wood engraving on thin oriental paper pasted on
cardboard

This print, also known as *Paths into the Woods*, depicts a path winding through a dark wood with overhanging tree branches engraved in a primitive, abstract style.

In common with many of Nash's engravings from this time a female figure, most probably modelled on the artist's wife Margaret, is reclining at the bottom of the image.

Nash is renowned for his roles as an official war artist, surrealist, and landscape painter. He created powerful wartime oil paintings inspired by Cubism and Post-Impressionism. After the First World War, he suffered a breakdown but found solace in Dymchurch, Kent. Nash became a key figure in the revival of wood engraving and the Society of Wood Engravers.

Heaven

Paul Nash (1889-1946)

1928, wood engraving on Japanese paper

Heaven is the frontispiece to Jules Tellier's *Abd-er-Rahman in Paradise* (1928). The book narrates the journeys of Abd-er-Rahman, the Andalucian Governor who led Muslims into battle against Charles Martel in 732. Nash's engravings represent key stages of the protagonist's journey - Heavens, Two Angels, Paradise, and Boredom.

Boredom

Paul Nash (1889-1946)

1928, wood engraving on Japanese paper

Boredom depicts a pivotal moment in Abd-er-Rahman's journey. After traversing the Paradise and the Garden of Delights, Abd-er-Rahman grows bored of pleasure.

The narrative imparts a moral lesson: 'the wisest thing to crave at the end of our mortal journey is not an eternal round of pleasure but the stillness of sleep'.

Odeon

Brian Rice (born 1936)
1969, screenprint on paper

Odeon, one of two recent acquisitions generously donated to RAMM by the Art Fund, represents Brian Rice's early work during his time in London (1962-78). A significant piece stylistically, *Odeon* underscores Rice's enduring fascination with architecture. The artwork manifests this interest through segments of radiating colour and lines, evoking the aesthetic of Art Deco design.

Gifted through the Art Fund, 2016.

The King's Tomb

Brian Rice (born 1936)
1995, lithograph on paper

This piece reflects Rice's fascination with archaeology and related imagery. It is inspired by motifs from rock art—a theme that first featured in his print *Mazefield* from the same year. The artwork delves into the exploration of universal abstract patterns discovered in prehistoric rock engravings. A mazefield adorned with spirals is positioned beneath a dynamic band of vivid red vermillion, which encases a sinuous serpentine form.

Mr Whitelegg's Fair 1934

Edna Fry (née Arthur)

1934, etching on paper

Fry specialised in etchings of Exeter and Devon scenes. She started her working life in the millinery (hat-making) trade in 1916. This etching depicts a moment of everyday life in the South of England. A fair is being put up or taken down while adults and children look about and talk. From 1917 to 1927 Fry attended the Royal Albert Memorial School of Fine Art which was based here at the Museum.

Two Girls at the Printing Press (Salon des Arts Libéraux)

Paul Emile Berthon (1872-1909)

1900, colour lithograph on paper

This lithograph is typical of Berthon's Art Nouveau style. Berthon mainly produced posters; in 1900 he made this print for the Salon des Arts Libéraux. The poster was also printed in editions without letters for collectors. Only a few copies with the letters have survived.

It is interesting to see two women pictured near a printing press. For many centuries, printing and printmaking was a world dominated by men.

Although we do not know whether Berthon was sending a message to the visitors to the Salon, the poster seems to introduce the 20th-century printing revolution, which will see women play a central role in disseminating powerful images and texts.

Putting on Rouge

Dame Laura Knight (1877-1970)
1925, soft ground etching on paper

Knight left an indelible mark on various artistic genres including oil painting, watercolour and printmaking. Although renowned for her paintings, Knight's printmaking endeavours remain a significant aspect of her career.

Knight's works often feature vivid depictions of circus and theatrical scenes. This etching captures a woman, possibly a performer, applying blush to her cheeks. When portraying women, they are never shown in the traditional reclining pose but in action, like in this etching.

Boy Fishing

Elsie Anaginak Klengenberg (b. 1946)
and Rex Kangoak Goose (b. 1965)
1986, stencil print on paper

In 1962 Klengenberg and her family relocated to Ulukhaktok, Canada. Here her father played a pivotal role in establishing print facilities and artist cooperative.

It is the only Western Arctic community boasting a thriving printmaking program - a response to the pressing economic development needs of various Inuit communities across the Canadian Arctic. Her works capture the essence of life in the North, reflecting the region's rich cultural and natural heritage.

Together with Mary Okheena and Mabel Nigiyok, Klengenberg devised an innovative stencilling technique. It uses mylar (a thin polyester film) and overlays to create prints featuring diverse tones and intricate colour layering.

Richmond Horse Show

Anna Katrina Zinkeisen (1901-76)
1934, lithograph on paper

In the 1930s London Transport commissioned a series of influential posters. They were pivotal in crafting the visual identity of the city's transportation system. These artworks, characterised by vivid colour, bold typography, and captivating illustrations, underscored a commitment to artistic expression. The era witnessed artists exploring novel techniques, contributing to the evolution of contemporary graphic design.

Beyond her poster endeavours, Zinkeisen extended her artistic talents to designing ceramics and murals for illustrious ocean liners like the Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary.

Through my Eyes

Dorothea Wight (1944-2013)

1970s, mezzotint on paper

This mezzotint explores Wight's landscapes that reflect memories of the Devon countryside seen through ambiguous window frames. Here, Wight chose a pair of sunglasses as a frame for the landscape (pun intended, perhaps?).

Wight's prints have been exhibited worldwide in countless solo and group exhibitions. Her works are in several permanent collections in the UK, including those of the Victoria & Albert Museum, The British Museum, and the Fitzwilliam Museum.

In the Shadows of a Summer Evening

Dorothea Wight (1944-2013)

1976, mezzotint & aquatint on paper

Devon-born artist Dorothea Wight, a Slade School of Fine Art alumna (1964-68), is renowned for her role in establishing Studio Prints. This creative hub produced editions of artists' prints, collaborating with influential contemporary British artists like Frank Auerbach, Lucian Freud, and Paula Rego until 2011. While Wight initially explored lithography with a blend of natural and abstracted human forms, she transitioned to etching in the late 1960s. In the 1970s, she revived mezzotint, creating innovative colour prints that showcase a rich tonal spectrum.

This print is typical of that period, showing a mysterious landscape reminiscent of Devon seen through a window frame. The real subject, however, is light and the way it changes with the seasons.

In the Shadows of a Summer Evening

Dorothea Wight (1944-2013)

1976, mezzotint on steel-faced copper plate

Colour swatches and notes for printing *In the Shadows of a Summer Evening*

Dorothea Wight (1944-2013)

Ink on paper

Greater Bird of Paradise

Kathrina van Grouw (née Cook, born 1965)

about 1989, drypoint on paper

Van Grouw is a British author, curator, illustrator and artist with a passion for birds. She is best known for her book, *The Unfeathered Bird* published in 2012. While studying at Exeter College of Art and Design van Grouw came to RAMM to draw bird specimens, including this skin of a greater bird of paradise. She taught herself to prepare birds skins and skeletons and volunteered in RAMM's natural sciences department.

The drypoint technique is very similar to engraving.

Purchased with support from the Kent Kingdon Bequest.

Queen Elizabeth II and Emperor Haile Selassie I

Roberto Barattolo (active about 1934-70)

1965, screenprint on cotton

Barattolo's textile factory in Asmara, Eritrea, made this headscarf. It commemorates Queen Elizabeth II's meeting with Emperor Haile Selassie I in Ethiopia in 1965. Barattolo went to Ethiopia in 1934 to start a commercial agency. Following the Second World War he built a textile factory beginning production in 1956.

Screenprinting played a significant role in the textile industry during the 20th century, becoming popular for producing bold and colourful fabric designs. Artists and designers embraced the technique for creating custom patterns on clothing, contributing to the vibrant and eclectic styles of the 1950s and 1960s

21st Century

Printmaking as an artistic medium has endured into the 21st century. However, the conventional boundaries that once delineated the field of printmaking have started to fade away. Since the avant-garde experiments of the 1960s, printmaking has evolved in several new directions. It no longer plays a subordinate or purely reproductive role; instead, it has emerged as a central and significant component of many artists' creative endeavours. Additionally, new technologies have integrated into printmaking, leading to traditional techniques being altered or replaced.

Some artists have chosen to explore the untapped potential of more conventional methods. This may involve printing on surfaces other than paper, working on a scale never seen before, or simply adopting approaches that expand traditional definitions of what a 'print' is.

RAMM's recent acquisition of works by artists such as Peter Randall-Page and Sarah Gillespie, demonstrate the enduring appeal of historic printing techniques. Both artists take inspiration from nature, capturing its ephemeral beauty that fundamentally contrasts the permanence of prints. They use the qualities of printmaking to capture the complexities of these natural forms as well as their symmetry.

Randall-Page describes how 'geometry is the theme on which nature plays her infinite variations and can be seen as a kind of pattern book on which the most complex and sophisticated structures are based.'

Wing

Peter Randall-Page (born 1954)

2009, aquatint on paper

This print shows Randall-Page's enduring interest in forms found in nature. His works evoke the intricate patterns of the natural world, especially the delicate, curving structures of insect wings. This aquatint was made using a stencil as part of an exhibition of the artist's work at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in 2009.

A sculpture of the same name by Randall-Page is displayed in the Courtyard gallery at RAMM. It is reminiscent of the museum's insect specimens, while the tiles used to make the sculpture are evocative of archaeological fragments in the collection.

Peppered Moth

Sarah Gillespie (born 1963)

2020, mezzotint on paper

Gillespie has been meticulously researching and drawing common British moths for over ten years.

The resulting artworks highlight both the beauty of these overlooked nocturnal creatures and their dramatic decline. Since 1914 about 60 species have vanished from Britain altogether and the remaining populations have diminished by around one third. Habitat loss, pesticides and light pollution are believed to be the causes of this catastrophic decline.

The Peppered moth is Gillespie's largest mezzotint engraving to date.

Printmaking techniques

Intaglio

Intaglio printmaking involves carving the image into the printing plate, typically made from copper, so the ink is held in the recessed areas. The main intaglio techniques include engraving, etching, drypoint, mezzotint and aquatint. Engraving, etching and drypoint are techniques that create defined lines or dots on the plate obtained using a sharp tool called a burin, or with a needle and an acid bath in the case of etching. Mezzotint and aquatint are tonal techniques that create tone areas on a plate rather than lines. Mezzotint is known for its ability to produce rich, velvety blacks, while aquatint is known for its grainy or granular texture.

Relief

Relief printmaking describes any printing technique that involves carving the negative space around a design so the lines of this motif stand higher for the ink to sit on. There are several relief printmaking techniques, each with their own characteristics. The techniques represented in this exhibition are woodcut, linocut, wood engraving and woodblock printing. The first three are quite similar, with variations in the printing surface (wood or linocut) and the type of wood (wood engraving involves carving into the end grain of a block of hard wood). Woodblock printing is traditionally from Japan, where it is known as ukiyo-e. Multiple blocks are used for different colours, and the final image is built up through successive printings.

Planographic techniques

Planographic printmaking creates a flat surface where the image lies in the same plane as the non-image areas. Unlike relief and intaglio techniques, planographic printing doesn't rely on height differences for ink application. Instead, ink selectively adheres to the image area. The primary planographic techniques are lithography and silkscreen printing.

Lithography

In lithography the image is drawn with greasy materials, such as a greasy crayon, on a flat surface. Traditionally this is a limestone slab. The surface is then dampened with water, and ink is applied. The ink adheres only to the greasy areas of the image, while the wet non-image areas repel the ink.

Silkscreen printing

Silkscreen printing involves using a fine-mesh fabric stretched over a frame. The image is created by blocking out mesh areas, leaving open spaces through which the ink is forced onto the printing surface below.

Printmaking tools

Top shelf (left to right):

Gauze for spreading etching ground on the plate, tapers for smoking the plate, turpentine for cleaning the plate, sperm oil, stopping out varnish

Second from top shelf (left to right):

Dabber for grounding the plate, woodblock ready for carving, etching ground, charcoal for rubbing down plate

Third from top shelf (left to right):

Engraving tools: burnisher, scraper, etching needle, mezzotint rocker, ink roller

Bottom shelf (left to right):

Five stages of etching: fresh copper plate, smoked and grounded plate, plate with the lines showing through the ground, partially bitten plate, plate cleaned and ready for printing

Printmaking tools vary depending on the technique. Artists often choose their tools based on personal preferences and the specific requirements of their artistic vision.

However, some tools have barely changed since the 15th century. For example, a needle is used to incise lines into a metal plate covered with an acid-resistant ground for etching. A burnisher is used to smooth or polish the surface of the plate, removing burrs and creating different tones.

Different types of inks are used in printmaking, including oil-based or water-based inks. The choice of ink depends on the specific printmaking technique and the desired outcome.

Printing plates

Common Quaker Moth

Sarah Gillespie (born 1963)

2019, mezzotint on copper plate

Gillespie worked from studies of specimens in Frank Lees' Devon moth collection at RAMM to create this mezzotint. In this kind of print subtle gradations of light and shade, rather than lines, form the image.

The quaker moth is on the wing from March to May. The caterpillars feed on a range of broad-leaved trees including oak, birch and elm.

Common quaker moth

Orthosia cerasi

Maidencombe, Torquay

Fank Lees, 8 March 1945

The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace

Jost Amman (probably artist, 1471-1528),

monogrammist SHF (block-cutter, active about 1564)

1569-79, carved woodblock

Printing plates, blocks and surfaces are key elements in various printmaking techniques, serving as the foundation for creating multiple reproductions of an original image. In intaglio printmaking, artists create images by incising or etching lines into a metal plate. The incised lines hold ink, which is then transferred onto paper under pressure from a printing press. Relief printmaking includes techniques like woodcut and linocut, where artists carve away areas from a raised surface (block), leaving the image in relief. Ink is applied to the raised surface, and the image is transferred to paper.

Each material brings unique characteristics to the final print, influencing texture, line quality, and overall visual impact. Additionally, technological advancements have introduced new possibilities, such as the use of photopolymer plates in intaglio or digital printing techniques.