





1450 - 1550  
THE  
GOLDEN AGE  
OF  
THE WOODCUT

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THE WOODCUT  
REVIVAL  
1800 - 1925

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Museum of Art  
The University of Kansas  
1968



## FOREWORD

WILLIAM M. IVINS, for many years Curator of Prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, recalls that as a young curator around 1917 he was more than once scolded "by gentlemen of the older school" for buying "horrid rough old woodcuts by such artists as Dürer and Cranach when I could have bought the charming, refined, and delicate, white line reproductive, wood-engravings of such modern masters as Timothy Cole and Elbridge Kingsley." Doubtless these same "gentlemen of the older school" would have been still more upset had they known of the horrid, rough *new* woodcuts even then being produced by modern masters like Munch, Kirchner and Beckmann. The similarities are not accidental, for it is precisely to Dürer, Cranach and other fifteenth and early sixteenth-century masters that nineteenth and twentieth century artists turned for inspiration in their efforts to revive the woodcut as a major means of original graphic expression. Of course, the battle is long since won and the woodcut has taken its place as one among many valid graphic processes available to the modern printmaker. But Ivins' words serve to remind us that it has not always been so; that only fifty years ago skeptics had yet to be convinced of the value and legitimacy of this, the oldest of the printmaking processes.

These facts provide the rationale for the two-part division of the present exhibition: *1450-1550 The Golden Age of the Woodcut* and *The Woodcut Revival, 1800-1925*. Granted, these dates are somewhat arbitrary. Our *terminus post quem*, 1450, approximately coincides with Gutenberg's invention of printing from movable type on a press—a development that gave great impetus to the production of woodcuts in the form of book illustrations. The closing date of part one of our exhibition, 1550, is only seven years after the death of Hans Holbein the Younger of whom Carl

Zigrosser has said, "In [his woodcuts] he carried the method of Dürer to its classic perfection, the completest expression of the German Renaissance." The year 1800, which marks the beginning of part two, is approximately coincidental with the public success of Thomas Bewick's *British Birds*, a book published in 1797 and illustrated with Bewick's newly developed process of wood engraving. Our *terminus ante quem*, 1925, is perhaps the most arbitrary of our boundaries. After all, how does one accurately determine when a renaissance is consummated, when a revival has achieved its aims? No manifestos announce the fulfillment of a revolution. In any event, it seems safe to say that by 1925 the woodcut was almost everywhere accepted. If evidence is needed, the publication in 1927 of the English limited edition of a luxury volume of Vergil's *Eclogues* with illustrations "drawn and cut on the wood by Aristide Maillol" would seem to indicate the complete rehabilitation of a medium once thought suitable for illustrating only "the chap-books and fly sheets made for sale to the peasants and the less educated classes."

We have not attempted in this exhibition to assemble a comprehensive, chronological survey of the history of the woodcut, even within the two periods under consideration. Rather, we have selected prints which illustrate the wide variety of styles and techniques that flourished during these ages of experimentation and innovation. And, of course, our aim has been to make this exhibition aesthetically stimulating as well as instructive. We must leave it to the viewer to determine whether and in what degree we have succeeded.

Professor J. L. Schrader and Mrs. Diane Johnson, authors respectively of parts one and two of this catalogue, join me in expressing our gratitude to all who have helped with this exhibition. In particular we wish to thank Mr. Lessing J. Rosenwald, Mr. Fred Cain, Mrs. George Binet, Mr. Jon Nelson, Mr. Norman Geske, Mr. Laurence Sickman, Mr. George McKenna, Mr. John Talleur, Miss Alice Adam, Mrs. Bernice Rose, Mr. William S. Lieberman, Miss Alexandra Mason, Mrs. Jan Keene Muhlert, Mr. Millard F. Rogers, Jr. We are also most grateful to those institutional lenders identified in the catalogue entries.

BRET WALLER

## NOTES

1. Douglas Percy Bliss. *A History of Wood-Engraving*, London: Spring Books, 1964, p. 197. Bliss quotes from a letter written by Rossetti to W. B. Scott.
2. Katherine Mix. *A Study in Yellow*, Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1960, p. 24.
3. See the catalogue in Robert Ross and Aymer Vallance. *Aubrey Beardsley*, London & New York: 1909, p. 69. Also see H. C. Marillier. *The Early Work of Aubrey Beardsley*, London: 1912, cat. # 43.
4. John Rewald. *Post-Impressionism from Van Gogh to Gauguin*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1956, p. 193.
5. Maurice Denis. *Théories 1890-1900*, Paris: L. Rouart et J. Watelin, 1920, p. 260.
6. Peter Selz and Mildred Constantine (eds.). *Art Nouveau*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959, p. 50.
7. Claude Roger-Marx. *Graphic Art of the Nineteenth Century*, London: 1962, p. 58. For further discussion and illustration see "le Barc de Boutteville," *L'Oeil*, #124:35, April, 1965.
8. Louis Godefroy. *L'Oeuvre Gravé de Félix Vallotton*, Paris: 1939, p. 11.
9. Octave Uzanne. "La Renaissance de la Gravure Sur Bois: Un Néoxylographe, M. Félix Vallotton," *L'Art et L'Idée*, 1892, p. 118.
10. H. R. Rookmaaker. *Synthetist Art Theories*, Amsterdam: 1959, p. 50.
11. William S. Lieberman. *Edward Munch: a selection of his prints from American collections*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1957.
12. Paul Gauguin. *Noa Noa, Voyage à Tahiti*, New York: Reynal, 1961, p. 3.
13. There is a controversy at present over the proper dating of Kirchner's early woodcuts. Later in life Kirchner refused to acknowledge these earlier works, and in a recent article ("Kirchner in Dresden," *Art Bulletin*, Sept.-Dec. 1966, p. 335-366.) Donald E. Gordon raises further question as to the validity of the dating of the first one hundred or so prints as given in Schieffler. The date of 1900 for "Before the People" is given here as Peter Selz dates it in his book on *Art Nouveau*, footnote no. 6.

## CATALOGUE

THOMAS BEWICK (English, 1752-1828)

1. *A History of British Birds*, Vol. I: *Land Birds*, 1791  
Printed by Sol. Hodgson in Newcastle  
(Department of Special Collections, University of Kansas Libraries)

WILLIAM BLAKE (English, 1757-1827)

2. Proofsheets of wood engravings for Thornton's  
*Ambrose Philip's Imitation of Eclogue I in the Pastorals of Virgil*  
1821, London  
(National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection)

ANONYMOUS

3. English Broadsheet, 19th century  
*The Trial of Robert Blakesley*  
(Department of Special Collections, University of Kansas Libraries)

TIMOTHY COLE

4. Reproductive Wood Engraving, 1920  
(The University of Kansas Museum of Art)

WILLIAM MORRIS (English, 1834-1896)

5. *The Book of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 1896  
Edited by E. S. Ellis  
Illustrations designed by Sir EDWARD BURNE-JONES  
Printed by WILLIAM MORRIS at the Kelmscott Press  
(Department of Special Collections, University of Kansas Libraries)

ARTHUR H. MACKMURDO (English, 1851-1942) and the Century Guild

6. *The Hobby Horse*, published from 1886-1893  
London, Eldin Mathews; frontispiece by SELWYN IMAGE  
(Department of Special Collections, University of Kansas Libraries)

FÉLIX VALLOTTON (Swiss-French, 1965-1935)

7. *L'Enterrement en Province*, 1891  
10 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 14 inches  
(Allan Frumkin Gallery, Chicago)  
Godefroy 83
8. *Les Nécrophores*, 1892  
5 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 10 inches  
(The University of Kansas Museum of Art)  
G. 104
9. *Le Mauvais Pas*, 1893  
8 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 7 inches  
(Allan Frumkin Gallery, Chicago)  
G. 129
10. *Manifestation*, January-March 1893  
8 x 12 $\frac{5}{8}$  inches  
(Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld)  
G. 109
11. *L'Assassinat*, 1893  
5 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
(F. M. Hall Collection, University of Nebraska)  
G. 114
12. *L'Etranger*, 1894  
8  $\frac{13}{16}$  x 7 inches  
(Museum of Modern Art, New York, Transferred from the Museum Library)  
G. 137
13. *La Paresse*, 1896  
7 x 8 $\frac{5}{8}$  inches  
(Museum of Modern Art, Larry Aldrich Fund)  
G. 167

PETER BEHRENS (German, 1868-1940)

14. *The Kiss*, 1895 from the Portfolio *Pan*, a German Magazine of the 1890's  
10 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
(On loan from Miss Alice Adam, Allan Frumkin Gallery, Chicago)

EDVARD MUNCH (Norwegian, 1863-1944)

15. *The Kiss*, 1902  
18  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 18  $\frac{5}{16}$  inches  
(Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller)
16. *Winter Landscape*, 1912  
12 x 24 inches  
(Allan Frumkin Gallery, Chicago)

- PAUL GAUGUIN (French, 1848-1903)
17. *Auti te Pape (Woman at the River)*, 1891-1893  
8 1/16 x 14 inches  
(Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller)
- MAURICE DE VLAMINCK (French, 1876-1958)
18. *Head of a Young Girl*, 1915  
12 11/16 x 15 13/16 inches  
(Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller)
- RAOUL DUFY (French, 1877-1953)
19. *Fishing*, 1912  
12 1/2 x 15 3/4 inches  
(George Binet Print Collection, Brimfield, Mass.)
- ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER (German, 1880-1938)
20. *Before the People*, 1900, from the *Man and Wife Cycle*  
7 15/16 x 7 15/16 inches  
(Allan Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College)
- ERICH HECKEL (German 1883-)
21. *Singing Woman*, 1907  
8 1/4 x 6 inches  
(Allan Frumkin Gallery, Chicago)  
Dube 102
22. *The Writer*, 1907  
6 1/4 x 5 inches  
(Allan Frumkin Gallery, Chicago)  
D 124
23. *Fisherwoman*, 1908  
14 3/4 x 8 1/4 inches  
(Allan Frumkin Gallery, Chicago)
24. *Sailboats*, 1907  
6 3/16 x 8 9/16 inches  
(F. M. Hall Collection, University of Nebraska)  
H. 983
- EMIL NOLDE (German, 1867-1956)
25. *Head in Double Light*, 1906  
9 3/4 x 9 inches  
(Allan Frumkin Gallery, Chicago)
- WASSILY KANDINSKY (Russian, worked in Germany, 1866-1916)
26. *Les Bouleaux*, 1906  
4 5/8 x 6 1/2 inches  
(Lent by London Graphica Arts)
- FRANZ MARC (German 1880-1916)
27. *Sleeping Shepherdess*, 1912  
7 3/4 x 9 3/8 inches  
(F. M. Hall Collection, University of Nebraska)  
H 482
- MAX BECKMANN (German, later working in the United States, 1884-1950)
28. *Self Portrait*, 1922  
9 x 6 1/4 inches  
(The University of Kansas Museum of Art)  
G. 195
29. *Edenbar*, 1925  
19 1/2 x 19 1/2 inches  
(Private Collection)  
G 261b