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art & man

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Rembrandt and the Art of Printmaking

Both of these works of art were created by the man you just saw on the cover of *Art & Man*. As you can see, both are of a group of people. However, the people in the two works are very different. In one, some doctors are learning about anatomy. The other, which is a detail of a larger work, shows a group of poor, sick and crippled people. One work took months to do; the other, a day or two. One would be seen by only a few people, thousands would see the other. Rembrandt worked directly on one. On the other, he would never draw or paint a single line! As you can tell, the work above right is an oil painting. The one below was done in a medium that might not be as familiar—printmaking.

The 17th-century Dutch artist Rembrandt used all the artistic techniques available to him in order to express himself. He did some of the most famous paintings and drawings of all time. But he was also one of the greatest printmakers in history.

Artists had just discovered the technique of printmaking around the time that Rembrandt began working. Prints filled a great need. There were no newspapers or photographs, certainly no TV and very few books. People wanted pictures. Many prints could be made in the time it took to do a single painting. Paintings were too expensive, but ordinary people could afford low-cost prints. So Dutch artists began to do as many prints as paintings.

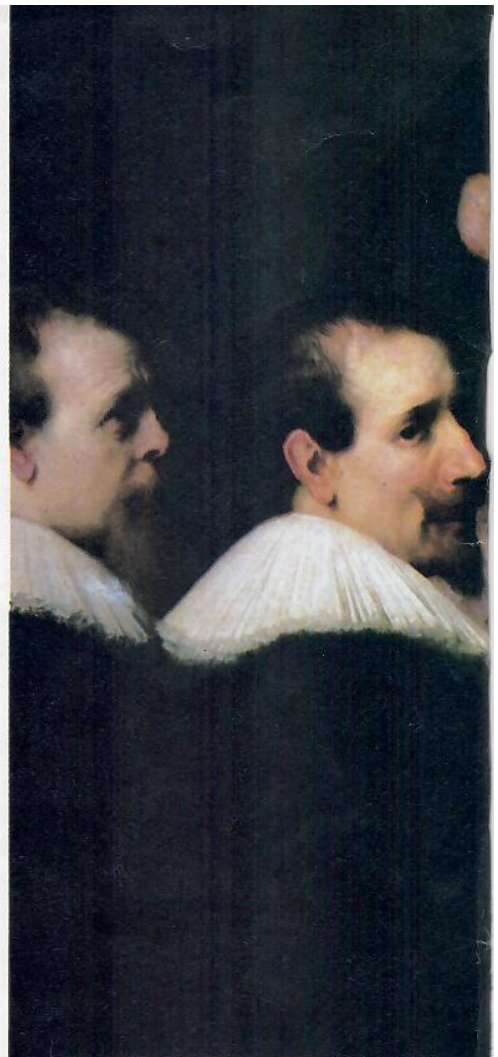
Rembrandt, Master

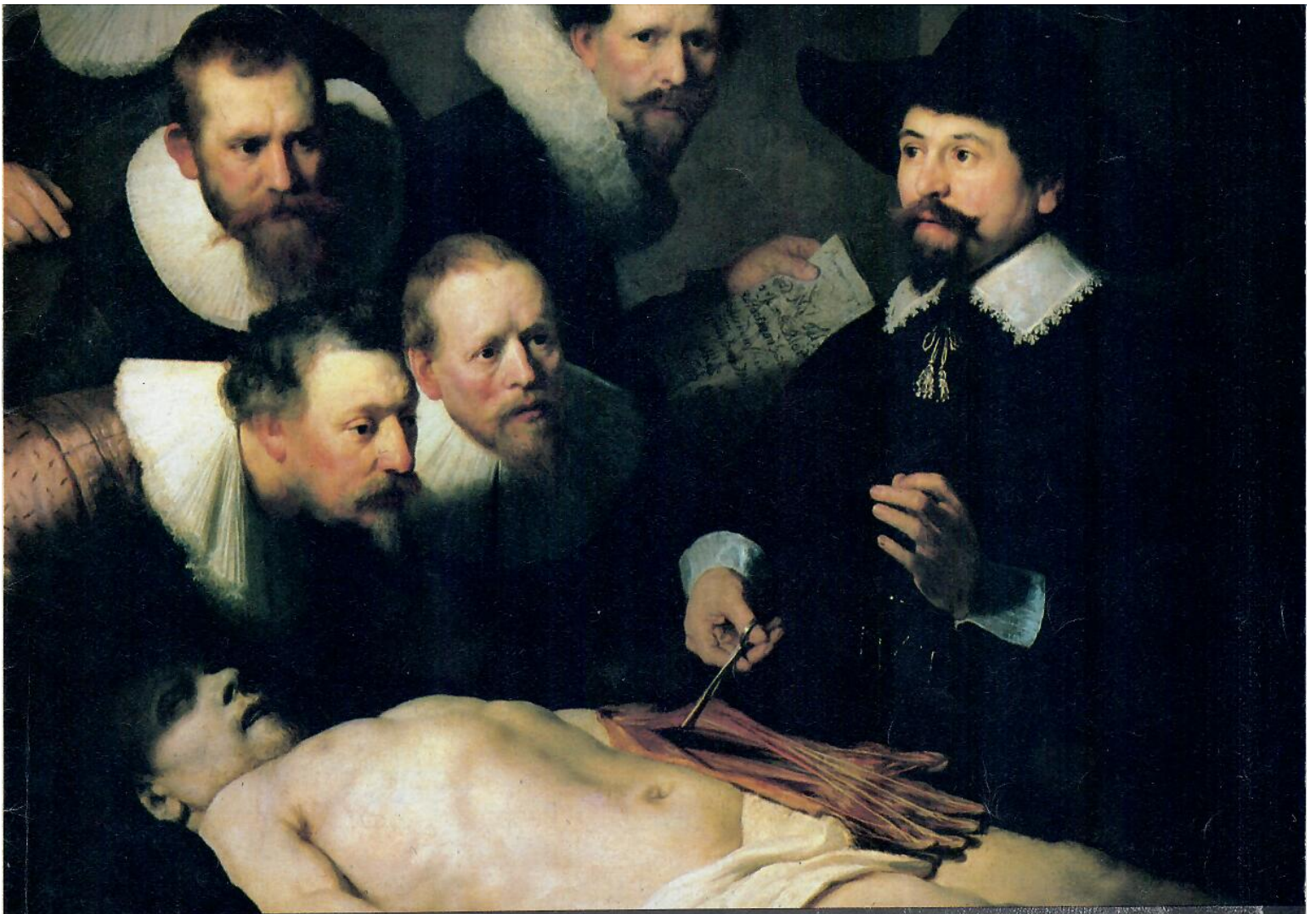
What made Rembrandt one of the greatest printmakers of all time?

COVER: Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669). *Rembrandt Drawing at a Window*, 1648. Etching. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

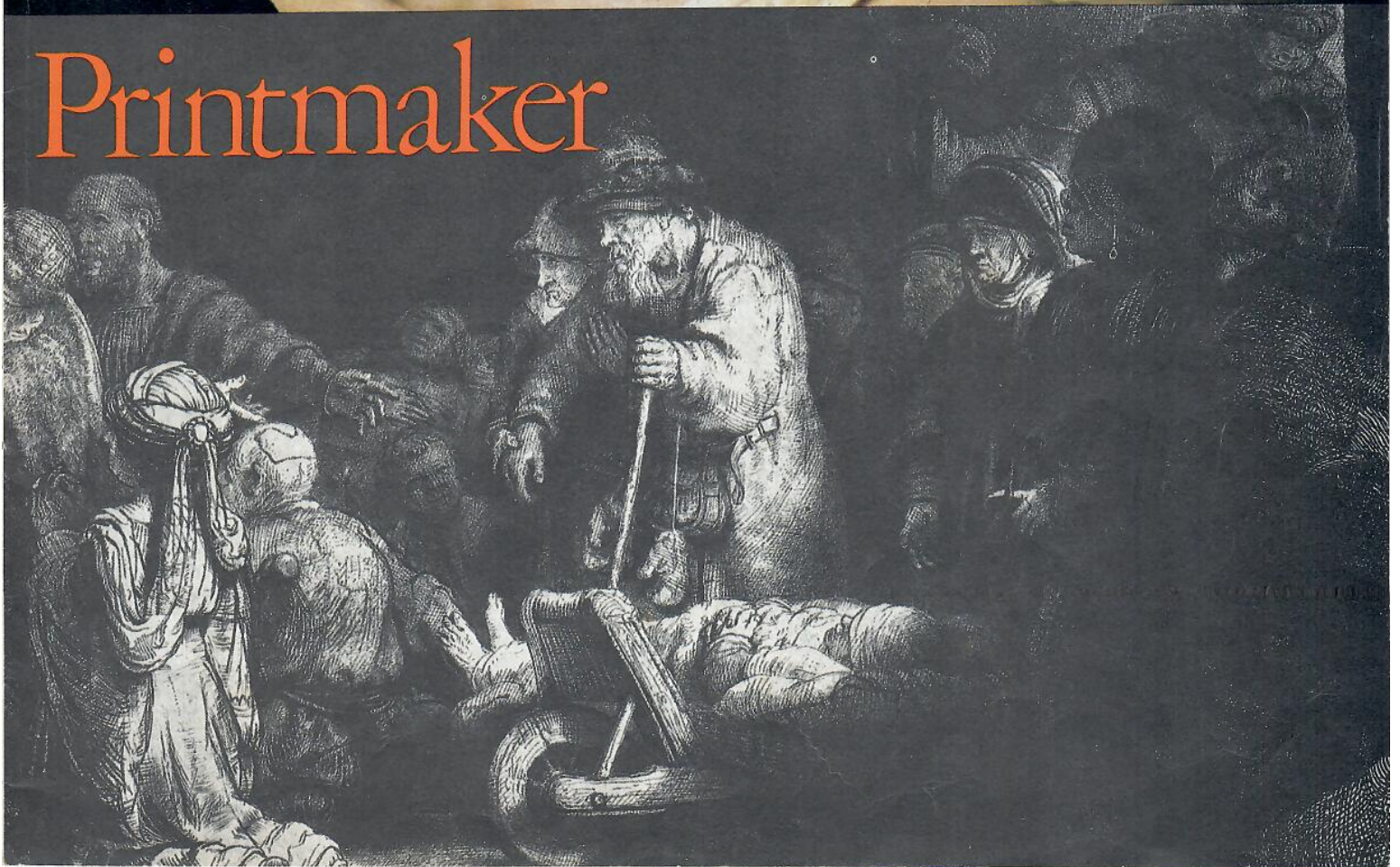
ABOVE RIGHT: Rembrandt. *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* (detail), 1632. Royal Picture Gallery, The Hague.

BELOW RIGHT: Rembrandt. *The "Hundred Guilder" Print* (detail), 1650. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.





Printmaker



Printmaking is very different from painting, drawing or any other artistic technique, because the work is *never* done directly on the paper. The artist cuts an image into a block or plate, like the plate done by Rembrandt, above right. This is inked and pressed onto a piece of paper, creating a *print* (like Rembrandt's print shown below the plate). As you can see, the plate has to be done backwards. There are many kinds of prints—woodcuts, linoleum blocks and engravings—to name just a few. In this issue we will look at two other kinds—etchings and silk screens.

Rembrandt always thought best in line, so he developed a special kind of printing called *etching*. In his self-portrait on the cover, Rembrandt shows himself creating an etching. He is drawing on a metal plate with an *etching needle*. The picture you saw on the cover is a *print* of the plate he's working on.

Rembrandt was interested mainly in people. He started out by painting portraits of rich people, which made him very successful and wealthy. But this wasn't enough. He began sketching the people he saw in the poorer sections of town and soon he wasn't doing many portraits any more. Paintings took a long time and Rembrandt had a lot to say. So he worked a lot of his ideas out in etchings. Look at the faces of the men in the painting on pages 2-3. Compare them with those of the people in the two etchings shown on these four pages. Do you think

Rembrandt felt the same way about each group? Compare the two techniques. How is each most suitable for the subject?

Rembrandt also saw people and objects in terms of dark and light. When you look at all these works, what do you notice about the light? Does it look as if there's a spotlight shining down on the figures in each picture? In the painting, all the darks are areas of tone. How are the dark areas created in the etching? How do you think Rembrandt would go about changing something in the etching? How would he know what the change would look like since he could only work on the *plate*, not the *print*?

You'll discover the answers to all these questions as you read further in this magazine. You'll learn more about printing techniques from a young man just entering art school and from a professional printmaker who is making a career out of her art. Finally, you'll create your own print using some of the same techniques as Rembrandt. And, as you read each issue of *Art & Man* during the coming year, you'll learn more about the techniques of painting, collage, crafts and photography from artists who are involved in these fields. The more an artist knows about each technique, the more choices he or she has in expressing himself to others. By next spring you'll know six new ways to express yourself.

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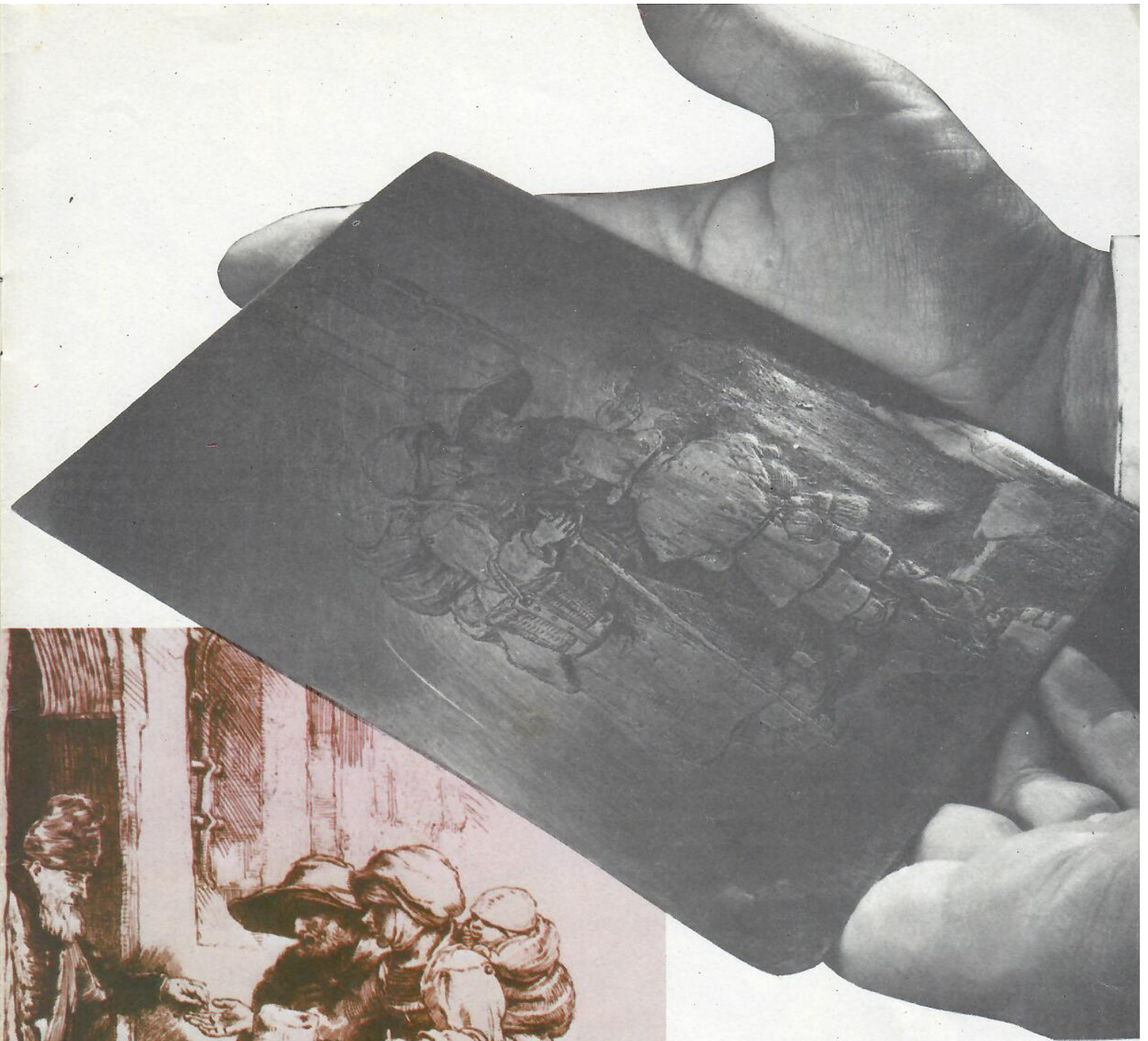
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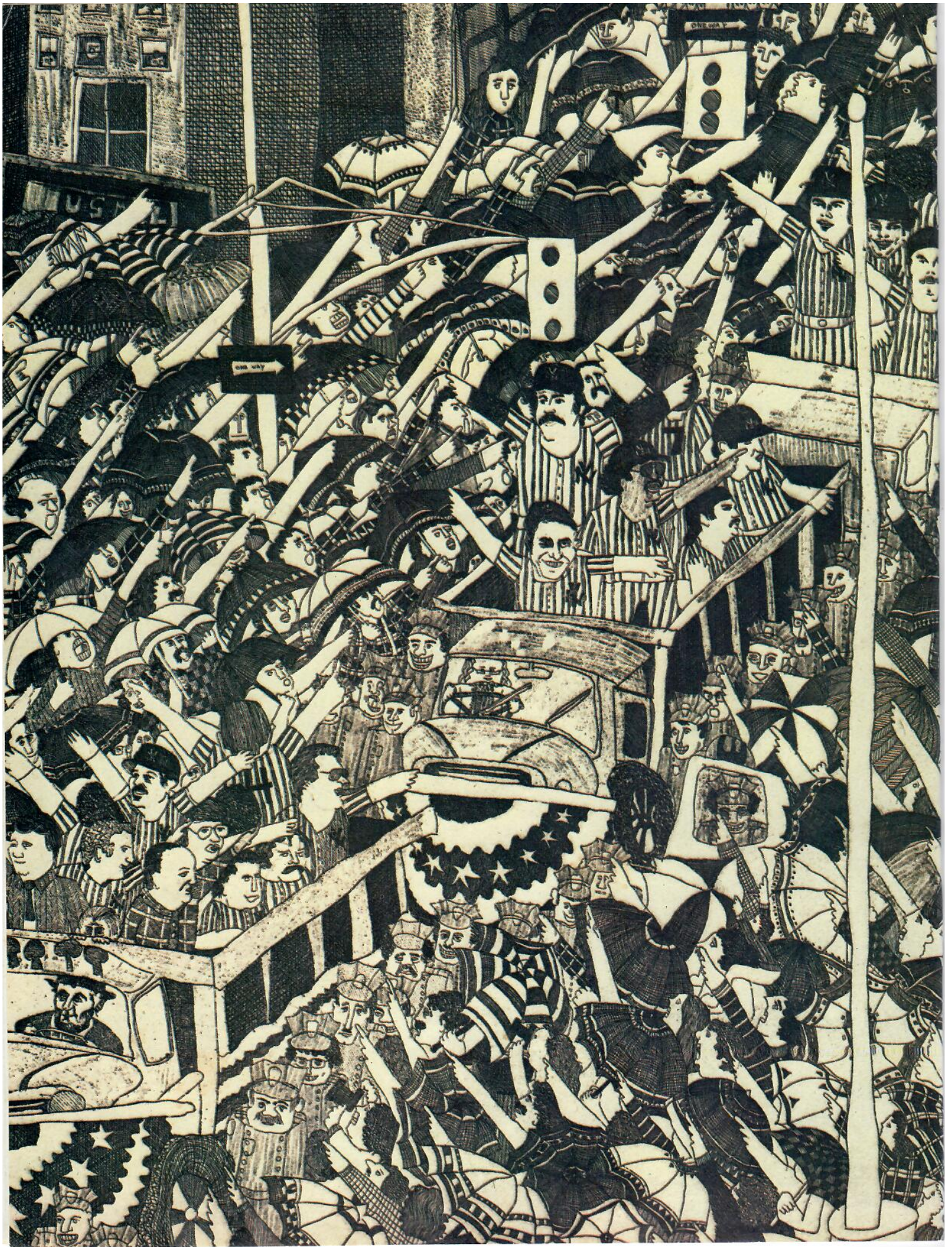
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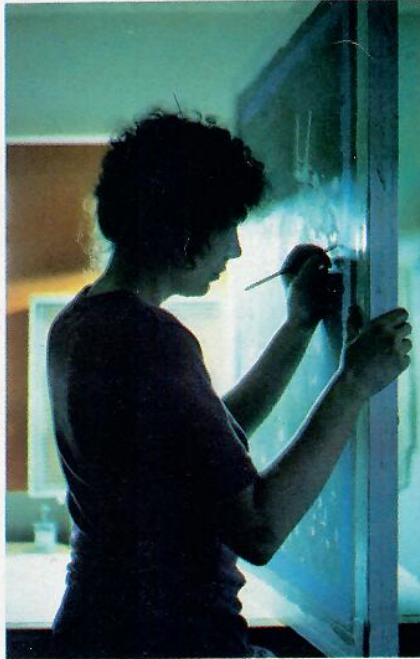
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Rembrandt. Etched copperplate (above) for print (below).
Giving of Alms. 1648. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Careers in Art



Madeleine Poster: A World in Her Prints

What kind of event is going on here? Look closely. Can you find some famous ballplayers? Can you find a President?

Printmaker Madeleine Poster loves cities. Whenever she's in one, her eyes roam the crowds of people. She's looking for crazy situations, funny expressions, interesting patterns of color and shape. Pictured here is her etching of the New York Yankees' "Victory Parade" (after they won the World Series). Did you identify any of the Yankee players? Did you find the tiny detailed portraits of Abe Lincoln and Ben Franklin?

Etching is very good for fine detail, and Madeleine Poster is crazy about detail. She will sometimes spend three hours on just one miniature portrait. She also does another kind of printmaking called "silk screen" (see the print and explanation on page 8). Many of her prints have been exhibited in galleries and museums. We talked to her about her art at her home in New Jersey.

Photo by Janet Soderberg

LEFT: *The World Champion Yankees — Victory Parade*. Etching. Association of American Artists



When did you make your first print?

Back in junior high. My art teacher had us doing silk screens, but I didn't like it at all. She was very demanding, really terrible. But it was a wonderful course. It made me decide to be an artist.

How did your parents feel about your choice of a career?

They were very opposed. They said they wouldn't give me any money for college if I pursued art. I guess they believed all the crazy stories about artists. Fortunately I won a scholarship.

Did you major in printmaking?

Oh no, I majored in painting. My last semester I was forced to take a printmaking course. Boy, did I see my mistake. It was everything I loved—drawing, color, detail. Prints are more intimate than paintings. People walk up close to look at them. That really appeals to me.

What is it about crowds that you like?

Some crowds are good; some aren't. From an artistic point of view, it's the patterns, colors, etc., that are important. Usually it's a special kind of shared experience that I hook into. In the "Victory Parade" it was the feeling of celebration and being caught in the rain

and all the colored umbrellas bobbing up and down.

Humor is important to me. I especially love urban craziness and I choose to draw the funny chaotic things. This may sound preachy, but the art you make has to reflect what you are. If you try to make it do something else, it never works.

You've done portraits of the Yankee players, Ben Franklin, and Abe Lincoln in the "Victory Parade." Do you do portraits in all of your prints?

Yes, I have a regular cast of characters that show up in most of my prints. I was working on an etching one day, and someone began to look like Henry Kissinger. So I said why not? And if Kissinger, why not me and my friends? I also like to use Presidents and characters like Spiderman, Wonder Woman, King Kong, and Colonel Sanders.

Etching seems a lot like drawing. How are the two different?

I learned the difference the first time I did an etching. I copied one of my drawings, line for line, on the plate. It was a disaster. Etchings require more in texture than drawings do. Etching really pulls more from you. And you can get more detail with an etching needle than with anything else.

How does your approach to silk screen differ from etching?

I feel more at home with etching. Silk screen's not very much fun. It's much harder on you physically. I do it because I want the flat, vibrant colors you can get with silk screen.

Is it any easier or harder for printmakers to get recognized than other artists?

It's easier. There are several competitions for printmakers every year, so it's easy to put some prints in a tube and mail them to these different places around the country. It's much more difficult to get paintings or sculpture around. I had won some prizes at these competitions, and this helped me get into a gallery.

Can you make a living selling your prints?

That's going to take a few more years. It's a hard business. If I don't walk into a gallery with a print every two or three months, people forget who I am. There are so many artists. You have to spend a lot of time pushing your work. I object to that. I don't want to have to sell me.

What advice would you give to students who are thinking about a career in art?

It's rough. You have to be prepared to give up a lot of things—going out a lot, seeing your friends very much. You have to put your time into your work if you want to be an artist.

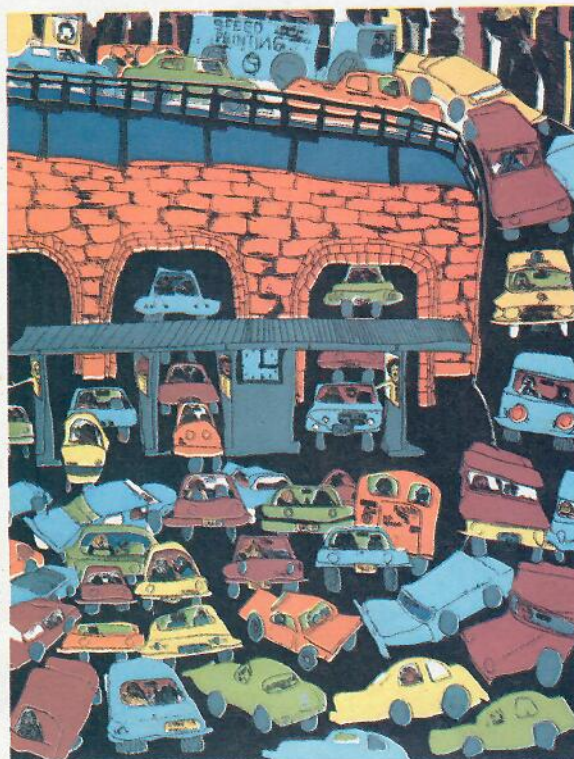
Girls will have to try even harder because sometimes people won't take you as seriously. Don't be afraid to do things. Build your own table. Open your own cans. Be as efficient as you can. You sometimes have to prove you're competent.

What makes all the work worthwhile to you?

It's just that if I didn't do it, I'd go nuts. I couldn't do anything else. Since I was small, I've always needed to do something with my hands. When I started making art, I knew this is what I wanted to do.

MAKING A SILK SCREEN

1. Material (like silk) is stretched over a wooden frame.
2. The parts of the design that won't print are blocked out on the screen.
3. Ink is forced through the uncovered parts of the screen onto a piece of paper placed under the frame.



LEFT: *The Lincoln Tunnel*. Silk screen.

Ed Dalpe, Printmaker

What mysterious process is going on here? Nineteen-year-old Ed Dalpe is making a stencil, one of the first steps in creating a silkscreen print.

Silkscreen printing was a big mystery to Ed Dalpe until he sold some designs to Mosquito Graphics. Mosquito Graphics is a tiny company that designs and prints special T-shirts for schools, clubs, and other groups. Although Ed never actually printed the T-shirts, he learned all he could about the silkscreen technique. And since he was the kind of person who would make his own brushes for painting (using hair from the family horses), it wasn't long before he was building his own printing equipment. One of his first prints (page 19) went on to win a medal in the Scholastic Art Awards. We visited Ed at his home outside the small farming community of Westerlo, in upstate New York.





When did you start getting serious about art?

I always liked to paint and draw, and by the time I got into high school, I was pretty confident about my art. I don't know why. Maybe it was because I'd been painting from books on the old masters and was familiar with what they drew. Then in high school, my teacher woke me up to what art was all about. Before, I had thought it was fun because it was something I was good at. But she said it's not just fun. It's a serious way of life, a 100 percent commitment.

How did you get the job at Mosquito Graphics?

The owner learned about me from some people at school and asked me to do some designs for T-shirts.

Was this what got you interested in printmaking?

The owner was using a photographic process to make the stencil for the T-shirts and it was very precise. This meant I could make prints that were a lot like drawings and that appealed to me. Also silk screen is so varied. I wanted to experiment and see what I could do.

How did you set up for printing? Was it very expensive?

The actual silk screen was really expensive—about \$50—and I didn't use that much either. The ink is pretty expensive too. I made practically everything else. They were tearing down an old building up the road so I got a lot of hinges and a couple of doors to make the frame for the screen and the base. For a light tray (which was used to make the stencil), I used an old Canada Dry sign.

How did you happen to do the print, "Owl and Man" (shown at the right)?

It was one of my first prints. I'd read several articles about owls and enjoyed drawing them. I took the owl from one of my drawings and the house from another. I liked the way they worked together. They suggested a kind of story. The house was all run-down and the people were dead, but the owl was still there, staring. The owl never left.

Did your equipment work all right?

No, it was pretty crude. I'd get big blurs instead of prints a lot of the time. If the temperature outside was too hot or too cold, it was more frustrating, because the screen would stretch or become too tight. But eventually my prints improved.

Have you done any printing jobs on your own?

I did a big job for a university choir. I gave them a real good price on a batch of special T-shirts, still figuring to make a profit. But as it turned out, I hardly broke even.

What happened?

I muffed it. Somehow I got the colors wrong. And since these colors were traditional with the choir, they weren't about to accept any others. I had to buy another batch of T-shirts and start over again. I spent a couple of all-nighters getting them finished in time. But I had to get them right or my name would have gone down the drain.

Have you had any other jobs in printmaking?

I printed some Christmas cards using linoleum blocks. I was going to sell them in school but nobody bought any. It was really discouraging. I must have spent about a week doing them. I even made my own boxes. People out here in the country don't seem to want to buy art. You'd be lucky to get \$2 for a good painting.

Was linoleum block any easier than silk screen?

No, it's much harder. When you're cutting the design on the block, it's easy to slip and slice your finger off. I learned to soften the block on a hot plate first, but then I would usually burn my hands. Linoleum block is good for simple forms, but it's hard to do details.

Printmaking sounds pretty hard. Why do you like doing it?

I can make 40 prints at a time. People are always asking for pictures, so I'm able to give them an original print instead of one of my paintings.

Where do you usually work?

In this little shack down by the road. Sometimes I spend all day there. It's quiet and nobody bothers me. In the winter time, I have a wood fire going in this big oil drum.

What are your plans for the future?

I'd like to make my living as an illustrator for books and magazines and work in the fine arts on the side. I'll be going to Pratt Institute, an art school in New York City, in a few months.

Will you continue your printmaking?

I plan to. Printmaking has been good for my technique in other kinds of art. You have to be very precise and sure of your lines. In drawing and painting you have more leeway.

How would you describe your style of art?

I haven't the slightest idea. I used to think I had a style, but I don't really. I guess that comes later in life. Right now, I just want to keep working and learn as much as I can. I'm trying to keep away from any one thing so my mind will stay open for school.

What makes you want to continue in art?

I guess because I've always wanted to do it. Everybody's been praising me since childhood — that must have helped me. Now that I'm older, I wonder what I'm doing here and what life is about and art kind of gives me an answer.

If I don't work for a month or so, I get into a bad mood. It's the stagnation. So you get busy, and you feel that you're worth something.



Art & Man Workshop

Fine art printmaking has become as important an art form as painting or sculpture. Although a print is a "copy," prints are often as highly valued as "one of a kind" drawings, or watercolors. In fact, many artists are mainly printmakers, rather than painters or sculptors who happen to make prints.

Etching is one of the oldest printmaking methods. You've already read a little about the way Rembrandt did his etchings. The process hasn't changed. The lines are cut, or etched into the surface of the plate, rather than leaving the lines raised and cutting out the spaces between the lines (this is the way woodcuts or linoleum blocks are made). When making an etching you must use a press that can exert tremendous pressure. This is because the etching paper must be forced into the cut lines to pick up the ink. When you rub your finger over the surface of a finished etching, you can actually feel the texture of the ridges left by the ink. You might think of the finished etching as the mirror image of the original plate from which the print was made. A line cut into the plate becomes a ridge of ink on the surface of the print. And a word must be written backwards on the plate if it is to be read correctly in the print.

You can do an etching more easily by using the "drypoint" technique (rather than etching the plate with acid as Rembrandt did). This means that the finished lines are cut directly into the etching plate. Etching plates can be made from soft plexiglass sheets.



Etching needles come with points of different widths for thick or thin lines. Light pressure will make a light line. Heavy pressure produces a dark line.



Plexiglass sheets make ideal etching plates. Artists usually use zinc or copper plates, but these are easier and much less expensive. The prints made from plastic look just the same as those made from metal plates.

MATERIALS

Drawing paper and pencil.

Etching plastic or 1/8-inch plexiglass.
8 x 10-inch sheet is best.

Etching needles
or other thin, sharp tools.

Etching ink.
This is a special ink that is very "stiff" so that it will stay in the cut lines until the print is run through the press.

Tarlatan or cheesecloth.
You will use this material to rub the ink off the surface of the plate. Cotton fabrics like sheets or T-shirts are too soft and they will tend to rub the ink out of the lines.

Blotters.

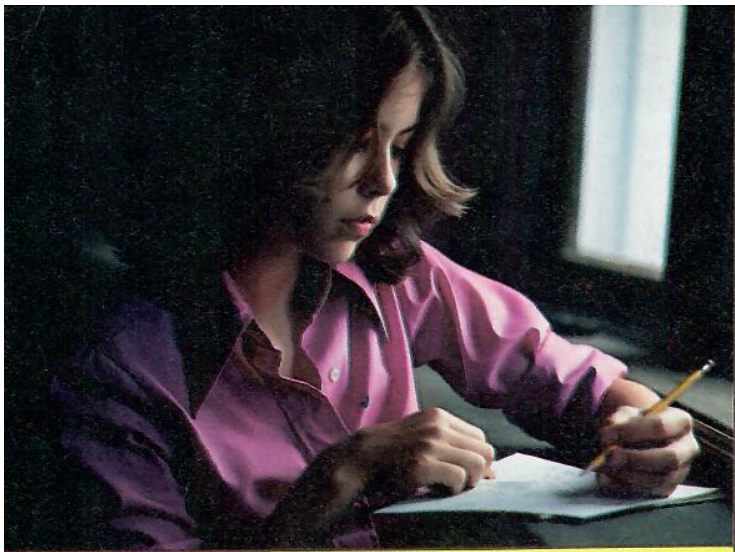
Etching paper.
It is important to use a good paper made for etching, although you may want to experiment with different papers.

Photos by Richard Hutchings

Special thanks to the Pacific Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library and the lower East Side Print Shop and Ellen Cooper for their help.

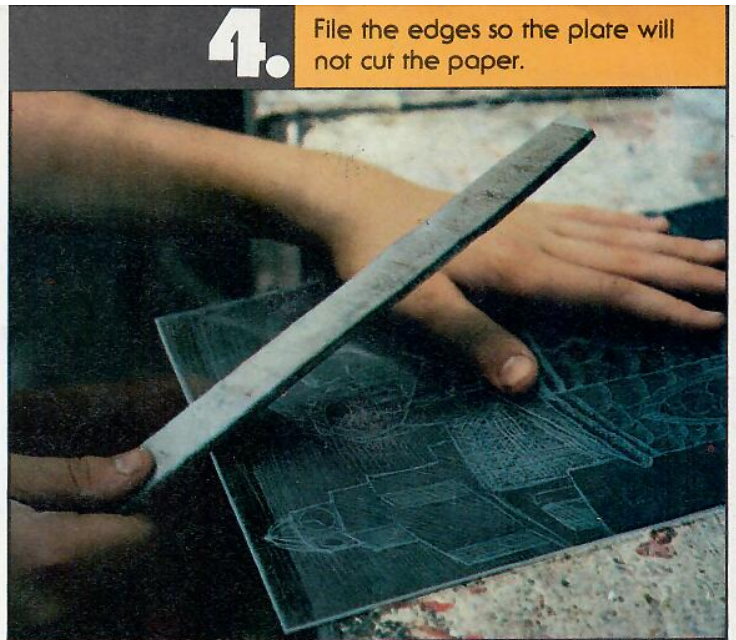
Be a Rembrandt

This class updated Rembrandt's techniques and did an etching on plastic. It's easy, fun, and when you've finished, you'll have a print done in the style of the "old masters."



1.

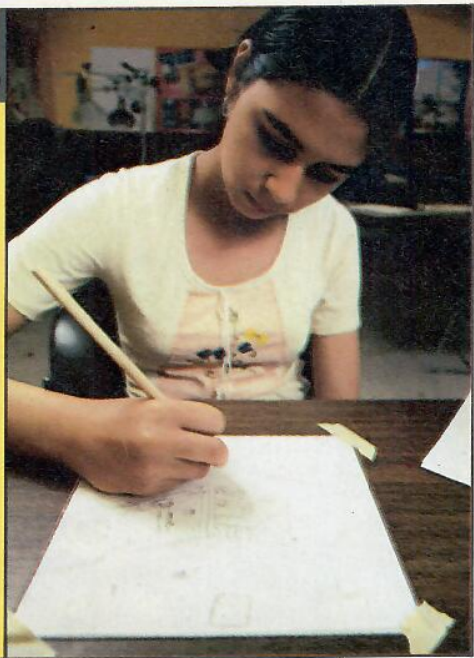
Start with a drawing.



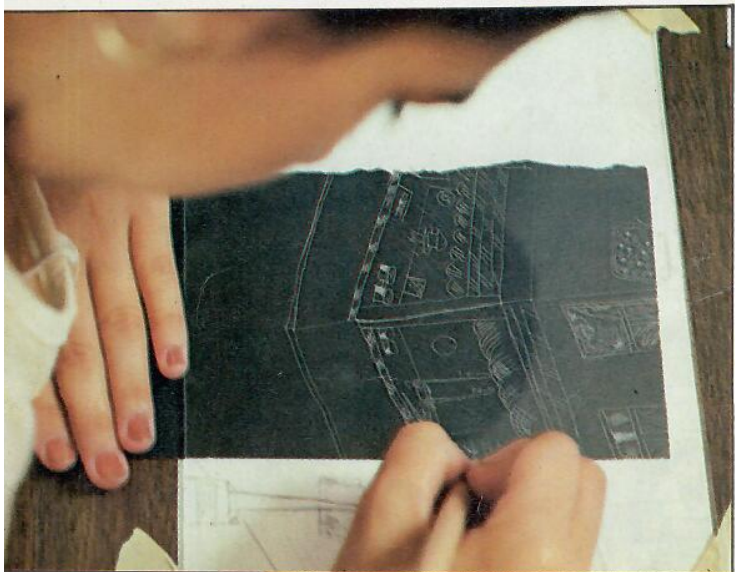
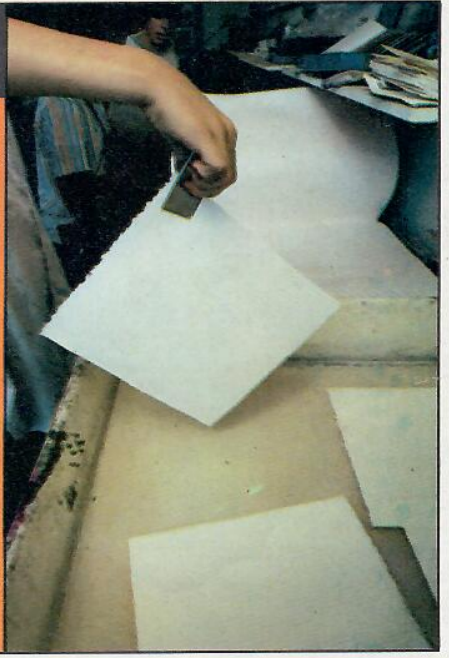
4.

File the edges so the plate will not cut the paper.

2. Tape the plexiglass on top of the drawing. Cut into the plate with your etching needle.



5. Put the paper in water to soften it. (Use cardboard holders to keep the plate clean.)



3.

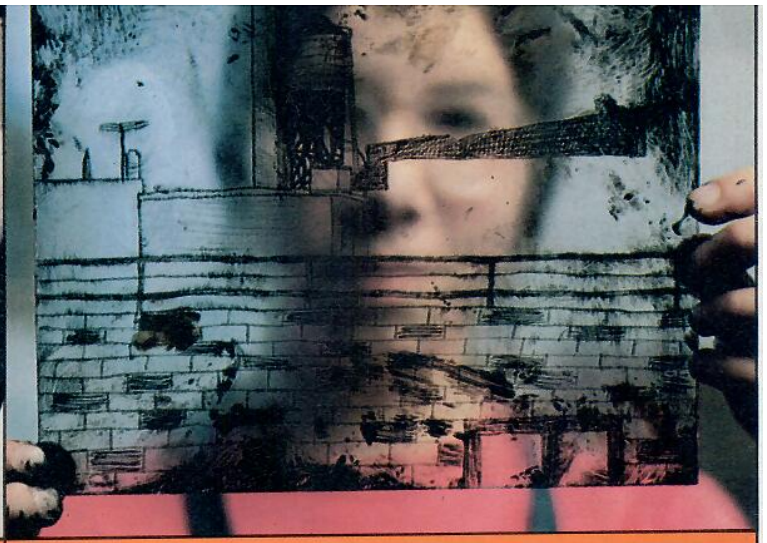
Check your lines by putting black paper in back.

6. Ink the plate.





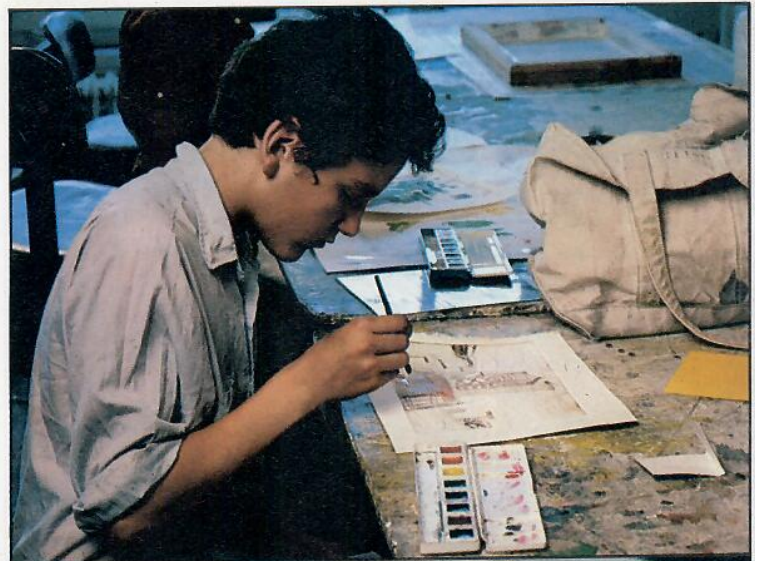
7. Wipe the plate.



This plate is wiped fairly clean. You can see how the ink stays only in the lines. Now, you are ready to print.



8. To print, run the plate, the dampened and blotted paper, and a piece of felt (for protection) through the press.

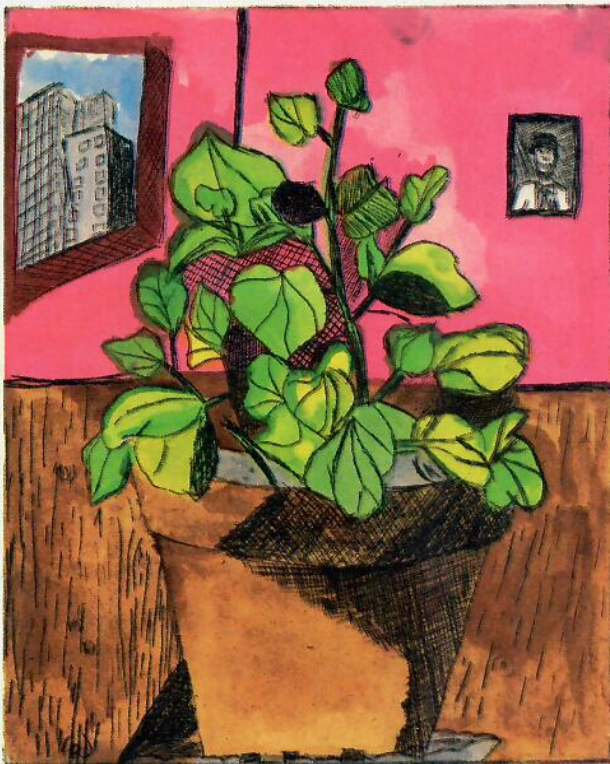


9. If you wish you can tint your print using watercolors.



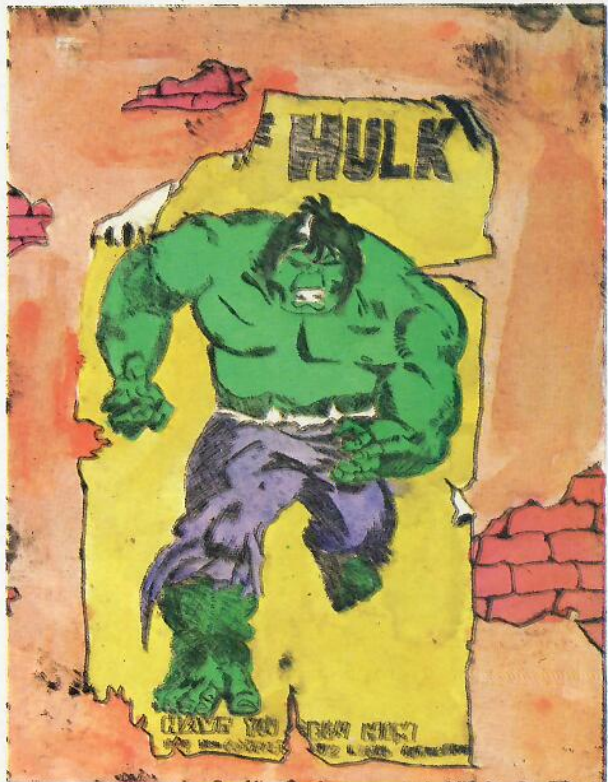
TECHNIQUES

When you do your drawing, remember that your print will be reversed.



Tone and contrast are produced by using crosshatched lines or by putting lines close together. You may want to make an object stand out by creating a value reversal. In the above print, the flower pot is dark against a light background on one side. Remember to vary your lines. You can do dot patterns like this background or wavy lines or curves.

Ruben Pagan



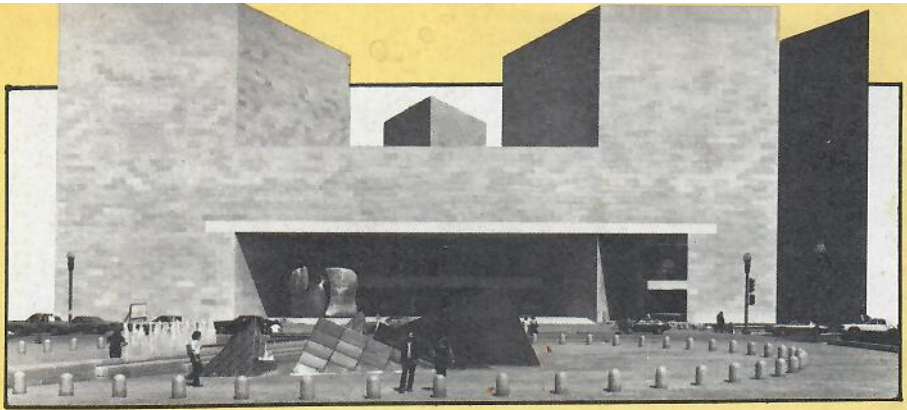
Jeremy Davis



You can use various color inks when printing. Wiping is very important in this print. Notice the different tones overall, especially at the edges. These are not etched lines but areas of ink that were not completely wiped off the plate.

The above print was done in black and the plate was wiped clean. Watercolor is very effective on etching paper.

ARTS ALIVE



ART EVENT OF THE YEAR

You enter under the two towers, through the vast doorway (see photo, above) into a low, sheltering hallway. You walk along this hall and suddenly you're in an enormous glass-enclosed, light-flooded space (left). As you look up, you see a series of giant red and black shapes hovering above. In front, there are trees, sculptures, huge colorful tapestries and enormous modern paintings. As you proceed through this central courtyard, the space constantly changes. You see dozens of works of art from different angles, distances, levels — from stairways, bridges and balconies.

You're not in some museum of the

future, but the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. However, it's not the same building you may have visited in the past. Last summer, the Gallery opened its new East Building. It cost a hundred million dollars, took seven years to build and has been called "a vast piece of modern sculpture." Seven famous artists were commissioned to do pieces especially for this building. One of these pieces, the red and black mobile created by Alexander Calder, can be seen in the photo at the left. The vast museum is featuring six major exhibitions. If you get a chance to visit Washington, don't miss experiencing all this for yourself.



Photo by Janet Soderberg



Andy Warhol, b. 1930. Marilyn.

MORE PRINTMAKERS

This is a picture of the film star Marilyn Monroe, but it's not a photo from a movie magazine. In fact, it's a famous *print*. In this issue you read about a great 17th-century printmaker and some young printmakers at the beginning of their careers. However, most 20th-century artists, from Pablo Picasso to Andy Warhol

(whose silk screen print *Marilyn* appears at the left) did prints as well as other kinds of art. You can see what some great "Twentieth Century Printmakers" have done in this medium at a show of the same name now being held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This major printmaking show will be there until the end of January 1979.



Mark Cohen, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, 1975. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

"MIRRORS AND WINDOWS"

... is the name of an exciting new photography show that will be touring the U.S. during the next two years. In the past 20 years, photography has become a major art form. This show features some of the new techniques and talents that have made photography so important. You'll see why a photo like the one at the left is a major work of art. The

show opened in New York in August and will be at the Cleveland Museum of Art during November and December. It will then travel to Minneapolis; Louisville, Kentucky; San Francisco; The Virginia Museum in Richmond and end in March, 1980, at the Milwaukee Art Center. If you live in or around any of these areas, watch for the exact dates of this important show.