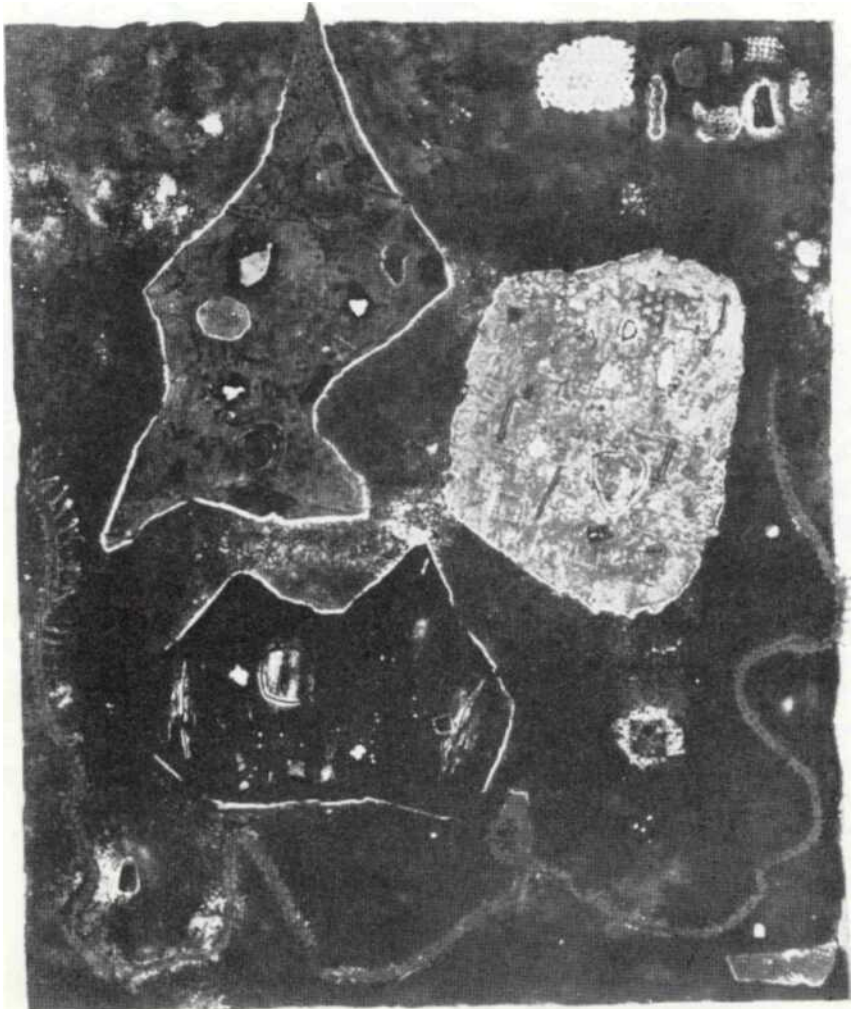


AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY

QUARTERLY

Number Twenty-Four 1962



PONCE DE LEON
Vernal Equinox

QUARTERLY

NUMBER TWENTY-FOUR — 1962

EDITORIAL

We have decided to devote this issue of *Quarterly* to the review of a selection of modern prints in the collection. In the previous number we reproduced two engravings and a woodcut of the Northern renaissance; here we have prints from France, Germany, Japan and America.

In the last five years or so the Gallery has been acquiring graphic work with a very definite policy in mind. The desideratum of a balanced collection necessitates, in our case, filling gaps in schools and periods with prints or drawings by the important artists: this we have tried to do.

In the field of the contemporary print we have followed developments with a number of exhibitions from various parts of the world — most notably, the recent *International Prints*, which included work from seven countries.

It might be mentioned in passing that we have the only examples of modern Japanese printmaking in public collections in the country: a small but selective group of the *sosaku hanga* school.

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MICHAEL PONCE DE LEON b 1922 American
VERNAL EQUINOX (COVER)

Collage Intaglio 2 x 17in
Purchased 1962

MUNAKATA SHIKO b 1903 Japanese
SETSUIN (right)

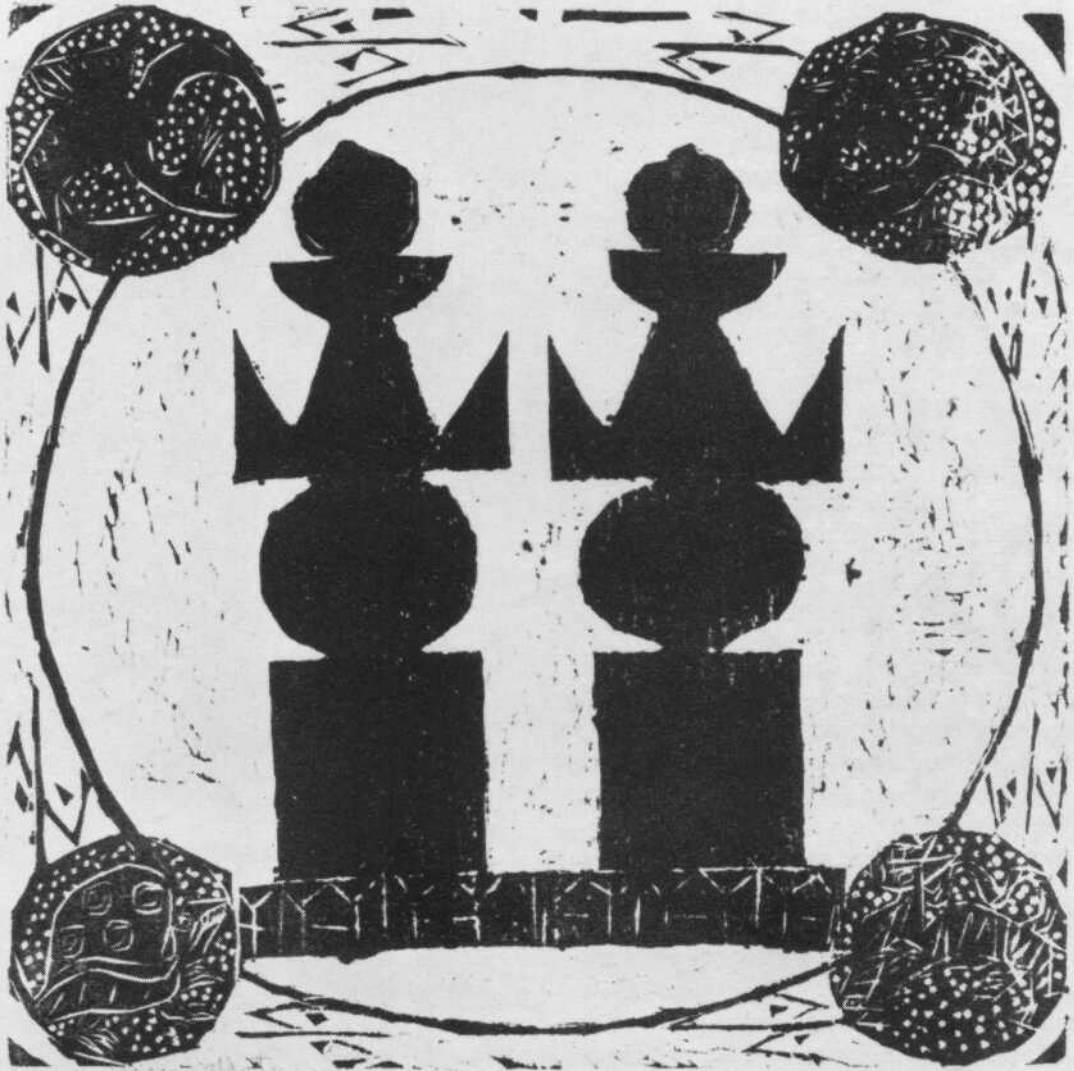
Woodcut 18i x 18iin
Purchased 1961

PAUL GAUGUIN (1848-190?) French
MASKS (overleaf)

Woodcut 11 x 3in
Purchased 1961

Printmaking is not merely a process for the reproduction of images, a method for the mass production of works of art. A print is not the same thing as a painting or drawing, differing only in the number of originals that exist: it has special qualities of its own, qualities closer, perhaps, to sculpture than any other art.

Shiko Munakata advised the layman to spread ink on an uncarved board and print it; the resulting black print, he said would have, not the blackness of ink, but the blackness of prints. Ponce de Leon describes his prints as tactile emblems, and this description would very well apply to the three prints reproduced



here. These two statements seem to suggest something essential to a print: tactility and total surface.

A print exists in space rather than creates an illusion of space. The image impressed into the paper creates an irregular surface, recessive or progressive in a seemingly mechanical sense; thus, Ponce *de Leon* uses colour to reinforce an image in relief, and in making a print proceeds, as he says, from the construction of a piece of relief sculpture in metal. Gauguin's *Masks* still has all the qualities of carved wood.

The spacial ambiguity of a print and the tactility of a printed image are immediate qualities directly related to the processes of print making. A print that conceals or suppresses these qualities is little more than a printed drawing. Few lithographs, other than those of Picasso, possess any tactile quality.

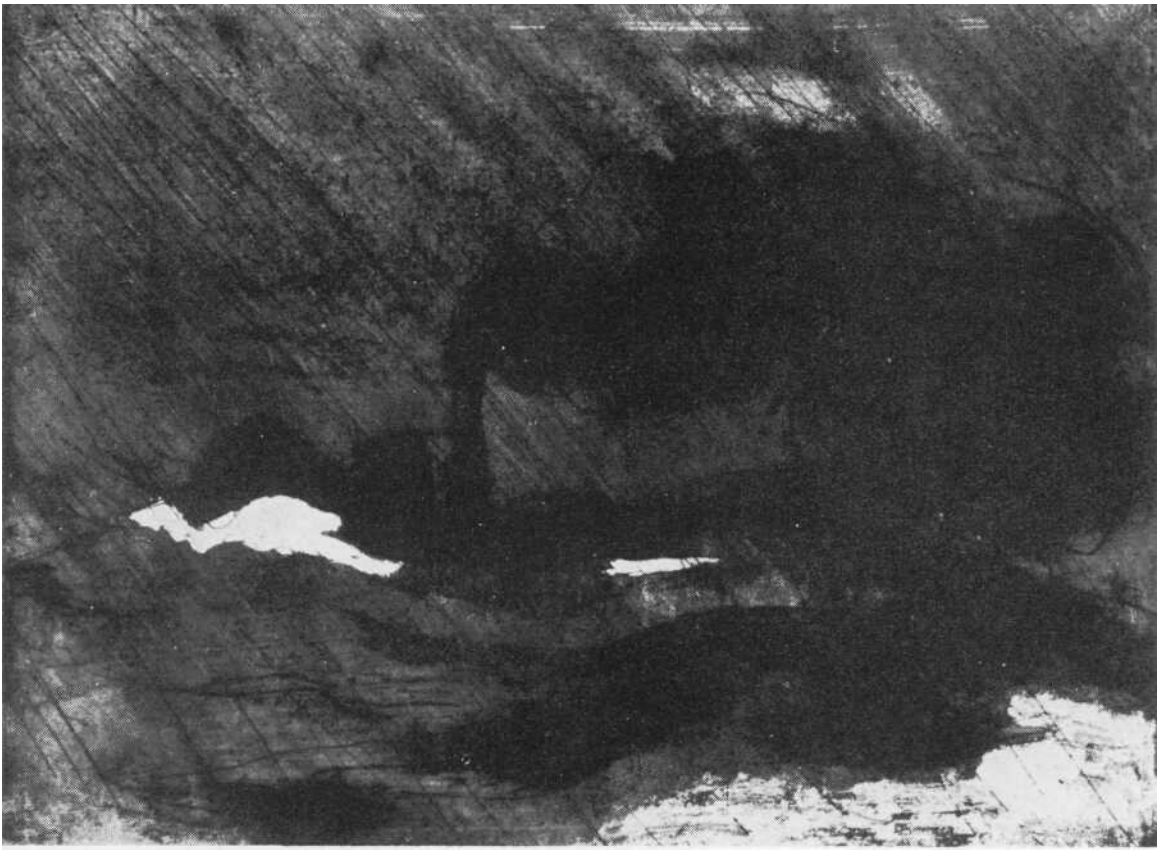
Munakata speaks of 'the power within the board', and his images seem to have been forced to the surface by his tools. S. W. Hayter describes a technique as an action exciting the imagination of the user, whereby an order of image otherwise latent becomes visible. This idea has, over the last twenty-five years, provoked a major revolution in printmaking, but, it would seem to be applicable to all good prints, from the ancient stone rubbings of China to the present day.

While these comments may seem to stress unduly the processes of printmaking, it is quite evident that the importance of works of art lies in the ideas they create and communicate regardless of the mechanics of their creation. It would seem, however, that the ideas conveyed by the print are more readily accessible, more immediate, in prints of this nature than those which are reflections of other works of art, that exist, or could exist, more appropriately in some other medium.

Munakata's *Setsumi*, Gauguin's *Masks* and Ponce de Leon's *Vernal Equinox*, all have some 'communicating tension': the tension not only of idea or image, but, that of surface — the tension of *prints*.

H.K.





EMIL NOLDE (1867-1953) German
STEAMSHIP

Etching 12 x 15 (Schiefler 135)
Presented by Mr Hugh M. Baillie 1952

WOMAN AND CHILD
Lithograph 13 x 14 L.S.
Purchased 1962

It has been said that the sea was Nolde's first vehicle for giving pictorial expression to his vision of nature. In 1910 Nolde produced a series of prints of the port of Hamburg in which he set out to transmute the more descriptive vision of his earlier work into the purer gold of his inner vision; the goal was to

be 'the evocative picture'. In the above etching realist description does exist but Nolde's desire: 'the evocative picture', is of much greater moment here than any merely visual description of the actual scene. The broad indications of ship, sea, smoke and storm react together with the artists technical and 'visionary' means to produce a work imbued with both an intense feeling for nature and at the same time strangely remote from it. An oil from the same year *Tugboat on the Elbe*, Private Collection Hamburg, Reproduced plate 2, *Emil Nolde*, Werner Haftmann, London 1959; carries this transformation of natural appearances to an even further stage of remoteness from any initial descriptive vision.

GEORGE GROSZ (1893-1959) German

SEVEN FIGURES IN A TOWN

Lithograph 8| x 5i L.S.

Purchased 1962

'The art of drawing can be an effective weapon against the brutal medievalism and the stupidity of the man of our time — provided it is practised by a clear mind and a trained hand.' George Grosz.

The lithograph reproduced on the right is one of many made by Grosz in his furious zeal for social reform. These prints appeared in portfolios and 'books of political education' throughout the 1920's under such titles as *The Face of the Ruling Class*, *The Robbers* and *The Accounts Will Be Settled*. More than once during these years Grosz had to appear in court 'on the charge', as he wrote himself, 'of having insulted the Good Lord, the Reichswehr and the instinct of shame and morality inherent in the German people.'

In 1933 he settled in New York teaching at the Art Students League. In Germany his pictures were denounced as 'decadent' and in 1938 he was divested of his German citizenship.

ERICH HECKEL b 1883 German

BATHERS

Lithograph 17 x 13

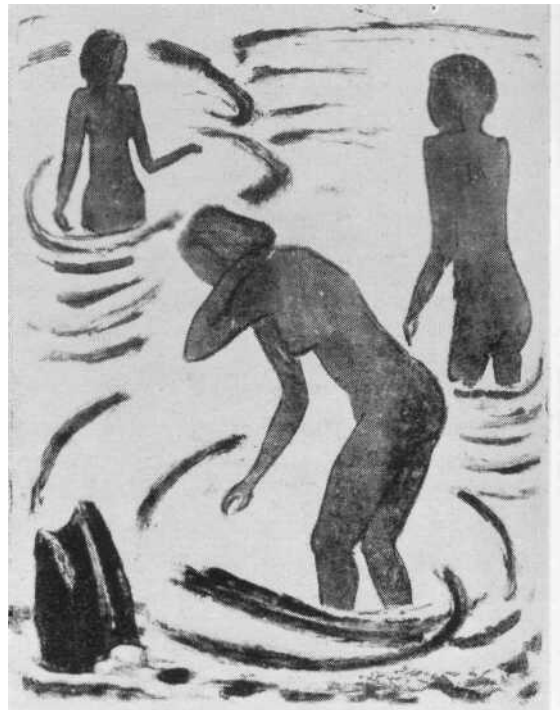
Purchased 1962

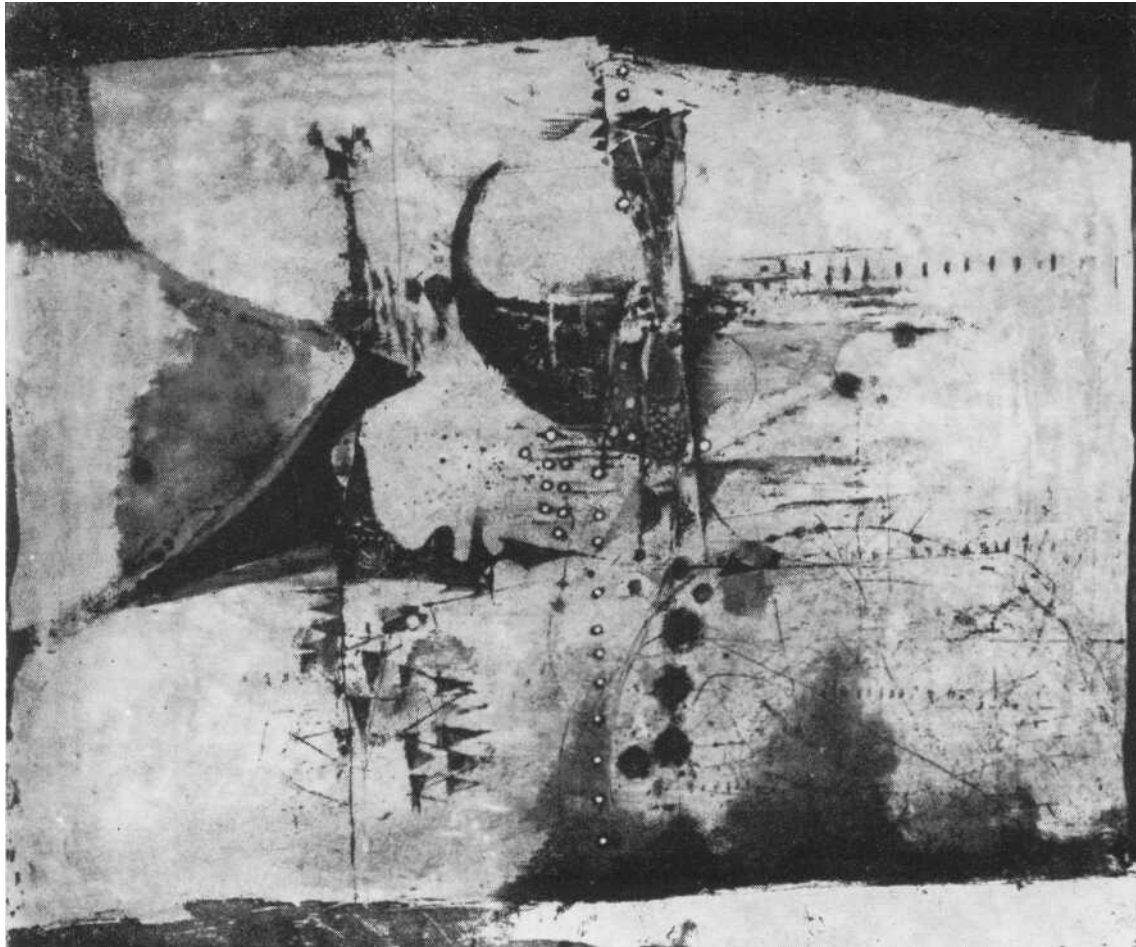
At all times less bitter than Grosz and many others of the German Expressionists Heckel's forms, and his predominantly black-white 'colour' immediately mark his work as expressionist.

That his view of the world is more lyrical than savage is obvious even in his more typically expressionist woodcuts, c 1912, and is clearly seen in this *Bathers* of 1959 with its reticent tones and sympathetic drawing.

Our collection of expressionist and related contemporary German prints has recently been increased by the addition of three of the prints reproduced on these pages. Other recent acquisitions to this collection include prints by Corinth, Lehmbruck, Kubin, Geiger, Greishaber, Mavignier and Gerhardt Wind.

c. MCC.





JOHNNY FRIEDLAENDER h 1912 French
THE BIRD

Etching 20 x 17 E.S.

Johnny Friedlaender is an outstanding innovator in the use of metal plates to make colour prints. In some space on the ground-floor of the establishment of Desjobert, a house of lithographers, he has established his atelier, which continues to exercise a seminal influence.

For all his technical brilliance — the exquisite adjustment of granular tone to spidery line-etching — Friedlaender is something more than an elegant improviser. His plates reveal the Japanese virtue of an extraordinary fastidiousness of means exercised in the direction

of aesthetic reticence . . . stillness — even, of inscrutability. It is, one feels, the expression of a metaphysical bent. Friedlaender himself has written: 'The possibilities that the metal plate offers are diverse and fascinating. I cannot say that I prefer one of them to the exclusion of the others. I use different techniques guided only by my inspiration, attempting to establish an equilibrium between it and the craft, whether it involves the velvety line of the drypoint, or the extreme rigour of the burin; the powerful and direct line of the sugar method or the endless gradations of aquatint etching. But when an etcher explains his techniques he always forgets one — that which he has sought and, perhaps, found in the privacy of daily work as in the secret of his heart.' R.D.F.

The Permanent Collection

PAINTINGS-DRAWINGS
PRINTS-SCULPTURE

will be on view over the
Christmas period

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