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The Exploration of Light as a Means of Expression in the Intaglio Print Medium

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THE EXPLORATION OF LIGHT AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION IN THE INTAGLIO PRINT MEDIUM

by

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

The purpose of this thesis will be to explore the possibilities of light and chiaroscuro in intaglio printing as a means of dramatic expression.

SCOPE OF THE THESIS

The projected area of research will include an extensive study of the development of chiaroscuro and dramatic lighting, examining both traditional master and contemporary printmakers as well as painters. Beginning with the early German and Italian printmakers, the research will include such artists as Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Goya, Daumier, Orozco and Picasso. Of particular interest for this thesis are those artists who have used light pictorially both for its emotional impact and its formal structural qualities. The projected areas of technical research will be documented report of steps involved in the completion of four plates and the printing of an edition of each finished print. The project report will include a summary and evaluation of the effect of this research upon my own personal growth in the ability to use light as a basic source of pictorial design and composition.

PROCEDURE

Having initiated thesis on a split summer program, the research, preliminary steps in drawing and technical data will be accumulated beginning the summer term of 1971. During the interim school year away from R.I.T. research on the written report will continue and be completed along with actual plate development and printing in the summer of 1972.

Methods employed will primarily include combinations of etching, engraving, and aquatint. Intaglio metal plate printing is selected for the thesis because of the tonal range provided by the medium.

ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS

An exploration of the linear quality of Oriental Art as a basic means of simplifying design and composition.

A study of the emotional effect of light and line in contemporary printmaking.

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

Interest in the use of light as a dramatic quality of composition began in my first year of printmaking, when unconsciously rather than through direct influence or research each successive plate resulted in a dramatically lit landscape or pictorial composition. This may have flowed very naturally from the fact that much of the subject matter was religious, but even where this element was not present the dramatic quality remained. However, the possibility of using light as a formal structural quality was only given credence at a latter date when the mechanics of technique no longer hindered the growth of style.

It was while working on an etching depicting the traditional scene of the Last Supper (see Fig. 1) that this concept was first employed. Grappling with a large plate and difficult subject matter, which restricted the composition to twelve figures, the print was slowly evolving into an elaborate religious illustration. Not until the need for a strong unifying element of compositional design was suggested did the possibility of using light as that element occur. The result was a fairly successful print.

Pursuing the idea one step further, the same composition was reprinted in pure aquatint, thus eliminating the linear quality and simplifying the composition into purely tonal patterns of design. The positive

Figure 1. Author, The Last Supper, Etching, 16 1/2" x 24", 1970.

results of this experiment (see Fig. 2) opened new vistas and probabilities in the use of light as a basic source of structure.

Intrigued by this concept, the beginnings of the following research findings and this thesis project were inspired. They endeavor to trace historically, the growth and development of chiaroscuro and the use of light pictorially, both to observe its emotional impact and to discover its formal structural qualities in the print.

The artists chosen for study were those who employed this concept most effectively, not merely as a school of followers pursuing an isolated idea, but master printmakers and painters who creatively and independently explored and utilized the many and mysterious effects of a controlled use of light. For although it is a superb vehicle for dramatic effect, it carries with it considerable hazard for an artist with little regard for the abstract nature of his forms and picture plane. Thus, this research will present those artists whose works evince masterful treatment of this technique of chiaroscuro, which has as its keystone a deep respect for the surface pattern of the work.[1]

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[1]Carel Weight, Painters on Painting (London: Cassell and Co., 1969), pp. 16-17.

Figure 2. AUTHOR, The Last Supper, Aquatint, 16 1/2" x 24", 1970.

PART I

THESIS RESEARCH

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BEGINNINGS AND BACKGROUND OF LIGHT AS AN ARTISTIC ELEMENT

Controlled use of the element of light goes back as far as the ancient civilization of the Egyptians when the artists and architects skillfully maneuvered its actual source, the sun and its rays, into an artistic form. With the deliberate placement of statuary and monuments, light and its reflections provided additional beauty and meaning to their highly regulated geometric forms. Often roofs were pierced and single bricks left out to allow one beam of the "worshipped" rays to fall on certain painted and carved walls. In a highly skilled and intelligent manner the artisans planned the paintings and wall reliefs so that the time of day on which the sun would rest there would coincide with the pictorial content.[2] We may thus conclude that a controlled use of light as an artistic element, existed since or was born in the cradle of civilization.

Ancient Greek and Roman artists continued with much the same regard for this element in so far as their three-dimensional forms took primary importance artistically. However, in many of the surviving examples of late Egyptian and Roman painting, we see evidence of controlled modeling of light and dark both in single forms and total composition. These were the seeds of the chiaroscuro principles in classical art, later revived and developed by artists such as Leonardo Da Vinci.

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[2]Kim Levin, "The Eye of Ra," Light: From Aten to Laser, eds. Thomas B. Kess and John Ashbury (New York: Macmillan Co., 1969) pp. 10-19

With the dissolution of the Roman Empire and the coming of Christianity, the development of illumination in the art form took a radically different direction. Christian artists, driven underground by the persecutions, felt the need to express the inner light contained in the gospel message. In an effort to combat the influence of paganism, they purposely avoided what they considered to be purely secular concern with modeling bodily forms and naturalistic representation. Hence, their use of the element of light was channeled into the skilled tonal patterning of their beautiful mosaics and frescos.

The greatest contribution of Medieval culture to an appreciation of thestructural and artistic use of light was the development of the stained glass window. When this art form reached its peak in the thirteenth century French Gothic cathedrals, light became the pure elemental force which effected their total pictorial and compositional perfection.[3]

Historical background for the structural and artistic use of light and shade could hardly be concluded without some consideration of its development in the Eastern art world. Simultaneous with the Christian expressions of spiritual illumination, priestly Buddhist artists were experiencing their period of enlightment. Their philosophical meditations are reflected in exquisitely light-structured landscape compositions.

In no other culture do we find such sensitively developed reactions to light and shadow. Displayed in their delicate handling of the impressions of atmosphere is a rare appreciation of merging lights and shades.

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[3]Florence Deuchler, "Gothic Glass", Light: From Aten to Laser, eds. Thomas B. Hess and John Ashbury (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1969) pp. 10-19.

As the employment of light grew and came into its own in the Pre-Renaissance and Renaissance periods, more specifics evolved which produced searching artistic explorations into the qualities of chiaroscuro and dramatic lighting.

CHAPTER II

THE USE OF CHIAROSCURO BY EARLY ITALIAN AND GERMAN PRINTMAKERS

The term chiaroscuro was first used to describe the painters' method of modeling figures by strong elements of light and dark. Chiaro, from the Italian word for light and oscuro, the word for dark are combined to create this descriptive adjective.[4] Leonardo Da Vinci employed this method to obtain astonishingly effective results in his paintings and drawings. With the simplest means of crosshatching and modeling he was able to bring his painted forms into relief, resulting in a new and dramatic form of expression.

In the history of the art of the fine print, however, the development of the deliberate use of chiaroscuro was born out of a technical rather than artistic need.

About the year 1500 German and Italian woodcut specialists, rather than the master artists of that period, experimented with the use of a new technique of wood block registration. This yielded clearer highlights and additional areas of color, supplanting the older and cruder method of hand-tinting. The cutters, experienced and accustomed as they were to rendering the works of the masters in their black and white medium, were challenged and inspired by the brilliant wash drawings of the

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[4]Herman J. Wechsler, Great Prints and Printmakers (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1967), p.24.

Renaissance and developed what is known as the chiaroscuro woodcut.[5]

Produced from several wood blocks the chiaroscuro prints were carefully registered to add dramatic highlights to the major areas printed in black thus simulating the tonal areas of color in a drawing. The finest examples of works produced by this method are generally attributed to Italian artists and the prints were probably the first to be specifically created as wall decorations. Detail was suppressed and emphasis was laid on composition of large contours and flat subtly-colored areas.[6]

Many claims were made to contest the invention of this method. One Italian artist, Ugo da Carpi, appeared before the Venetian Signoria in 1516 to plead exclusive rights for his. "... new methods of printing light and dark (chiar e scuro) ... something new and never done before."[7]

Da Carpi was considered a somewhat controversial figure. Vasari mentions him as a mediocre painter, but "in other flights of fancy, of the keenest genius."[8] His chiaroscuro prints could be considered products of the latter. (See Fig. 3)

Shortly after claiming his right to practice this new technique, he moved to Rome in order to base his prints on the drawings and paintings of the renowned masters of the Rennaissance.

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[5]Earl G. Mueller, The Art of the Print (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1969), p. 8.

[6]Wechsler, op cit., p. 24.

[7]Ibid., p. 78.

[8]Ibid.

Figure 3. UGO DA CARPI, Diogenes, Chiaroscuro Woodcut, c. 1516.

Even though the original purpose of the chiaroscuro woodcut was reproductional rather than creative, we see an underlying attention to and respect for the overall pattern of compositional design thus producing satisfactory artistic results. Ivins states that ". . . the Italian chiaroscuros are the most successful wall decorations made by European printmakers."[9]

However, the quantity and variety of Italian prints never quite equalled those of the North. Perhaps this was because of the dominant tradition of fresco and panel painting in Italy.[10]

Early German woodcut specialists had actually worked with chiaroscuros before the Italians, but their first attempts were ordinary small detailed black and white woodcuts, complicated by the addition of color.[11]

Their first known examples of chiaroscuro occurred in a series of twelve woodcuts attributed to Hans Wechtlin. Further transmission of this technique may have stemmed from a recorded visit of Wechtlin to Wittenburg, seat of Frederick the Wise, who was the patron of the great German painter, Lucas Cranach. It was possibly Wechtlin's influence that led Cranach to experiment in chiaroscuro prints. However, it must be noted that Cranach was much more competent as a painter than a printmaker. His compositions give evidence that he tended to overcrowd, overstress secondary details and underemphasize the main themes.[12]

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[9]W.M. Ivins, Jr. Notes on Prints (Boston: Beacon Press, 1943), p. 16.

[10]Mueller, op cit., p. 17.

[11]Ivins, loc. cit., p. 16.

[12]Mueller, loc. cit., pp. 32-33.

Thus while he skillfully rendered individual figures and objects in full chiaroscuro, it is obvious he never used it as a purely compositional force. (See Fig. 4)

It was not until Durer that the use of light and shade emerged as an artistic element in a composition created specifically for the print. Mueller states of Durer, that . . .

> . . . at one stroke he endowed the craft [printmaking] with the art it had hitherto lacked. Three dimensions are projected in full chiaroscuro. The landscape is filled with interior drawings of a skillful nature. Gothic pathos reflecting the heritage of German sculpture is evident in the nervous vitality of line although these elements are subordinated to a balanced formal control.[13]

Albrecht Durer was the supreme engraving artist of his time. For sheer skill and the technical perfection of his plates, he has never been equalled. The greatest change he affected through his work was a turning away from the expressionistic unreality of the Late Gothic toward a new realism. His journeys to Rome intensified his fascination with the mystery of Humanist ideas of personality which he gleaned by studying the works of Da Vinci.[14] In his portraiture of this period, we see evidence of a subtle introduction of the chiaroscuro principle, enhancing their psychological character to a much greater degree.

In his engraving, "Melancholia I," (See Fig. 5) Durer skillfully unites a multitude of controversial and unrelated symbols into a single powerful statement of mood through controlled lighting technique. "This

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[13]Mueller, op.cit., p. 33.

[14]Stephen Longstreet, A Treasury of the World's Great Prints (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1961), p.24.

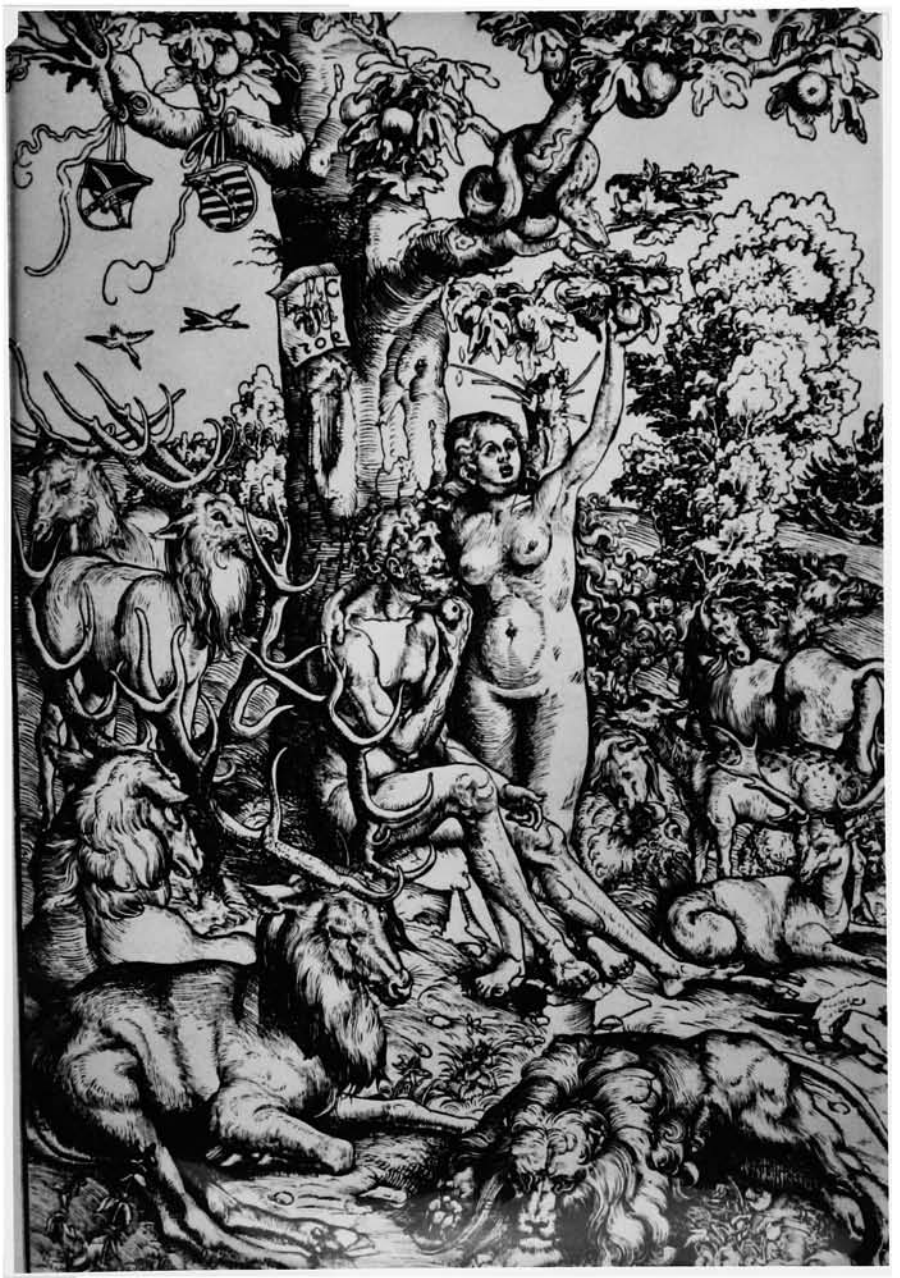

Figure 4. LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER, Adam and Eve, Woodcut 15 1/4" x 9 1/8", 1509.

Figure 5. ALBRECHT DURER, Melancholia I, Engraving, 9 1/8" x 7 1/2", 1514.

print is reminiscent of no work by any other master--it is not derived or borrowed from any works which predate it."[15] Here is displayed masterly control of emotional impact through conscious compositional structuring of light and dark.

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[15]Wechsler, op cit., p. 58.

CHAPTER III

INFLUENCE OF CARAVAGGIO ON DRAMATIC LIGHTING TECHNIQUE

Using light as its dramatic vehicle, Realism reached a peak in the "Baroque" which emanated from Rome following the period of the Reformation. Italy no longer catered to the serene softly lit works of such artists as Raphael or Titian. The new taste which Tintoretto had foreshadowed, was to depict violent movement and sudden, shocking contrasts of light and shadow. The leader in this new style was Caravaggio, who rebelled against both the serenity of the Renaissance and the artificial works of his own Mannerist contemporaries.

The Venetians had already developed a concept of total light in their paintings but "... it remained for Caravaggio at the end of the 16th Century to introduce the hard single source of light which modeled his forms into a kind of super-realism..."[16] His use of light and shadow was "... profoundly original in its effects even though it may have originated in a traditional purpose."[17]

It was said that Caravaggio painted in a shuttered room with a single light suspended from the ceiling.[18] Whether or not this is true, the light in his paintings often does enter from one side isolating parts of the forms in livid brilliance. Dangerous as this fragmentation would

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[16] Weight, op. cit., p. 16.

[17] Michael Kitson, Complete Paintings of Caravaggio (New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 1967), p. 9.

[18] Ibid., p. 8.

have been for a painter of lesser genius than Caravaggio, he skillfully lifts the decisively lit forms out of a penetrating envelope of darkness creating a dramatically powerful mood while maintaining the inherent abstract pattern of the picture surface. He seems to have set his scenes, ". . . so that one beam of white light rakes into the darkness cutting like a blade over flesh and bone."[19] As opposed to the half shadows, reflected lights, or sensations of dimly perceived space characteristic of Rembrandt, he deliberately intended this forced theatrical light to be as shocking as a spotlight beamed onto a dark stage. (See Fig. 6)

This genius of Caravaggio has only become recognized in recent decades. In an article which summarizes the first major exhibition of Caravaggio's works in America, Ralph Fabri states the following:

> At the beginning of this century he was usually considered a fine draftsman but a flashy somewhat superficial painter. Actually, Caravaggio should be seen as one of the important artists instrumental in the establishing or developing of the Baroque with its turbulent motion and gesture, dramatic lighting effects and assymmetrical composition . . .[20]

While many artists unquestionably worked under the influence of Caravaggio, there have been other later masters, "who liked dark practically black shadows and very strong lights, and at one time or another artists like Velasquez, Guido Reni and Rembrandt have been called followers of Caravaggio."[21]

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[19]Eleanor Munro, "The Birth of The Baroque," The Encyclopedia of Art (New York: Golden Press, 1967), p. 178.

[20]Ralph Fabri, "Caravaggio and His Followers," Today's Art, Vol. 19, No. 12 (December, 1971), p. 11.

[21]Ibid.

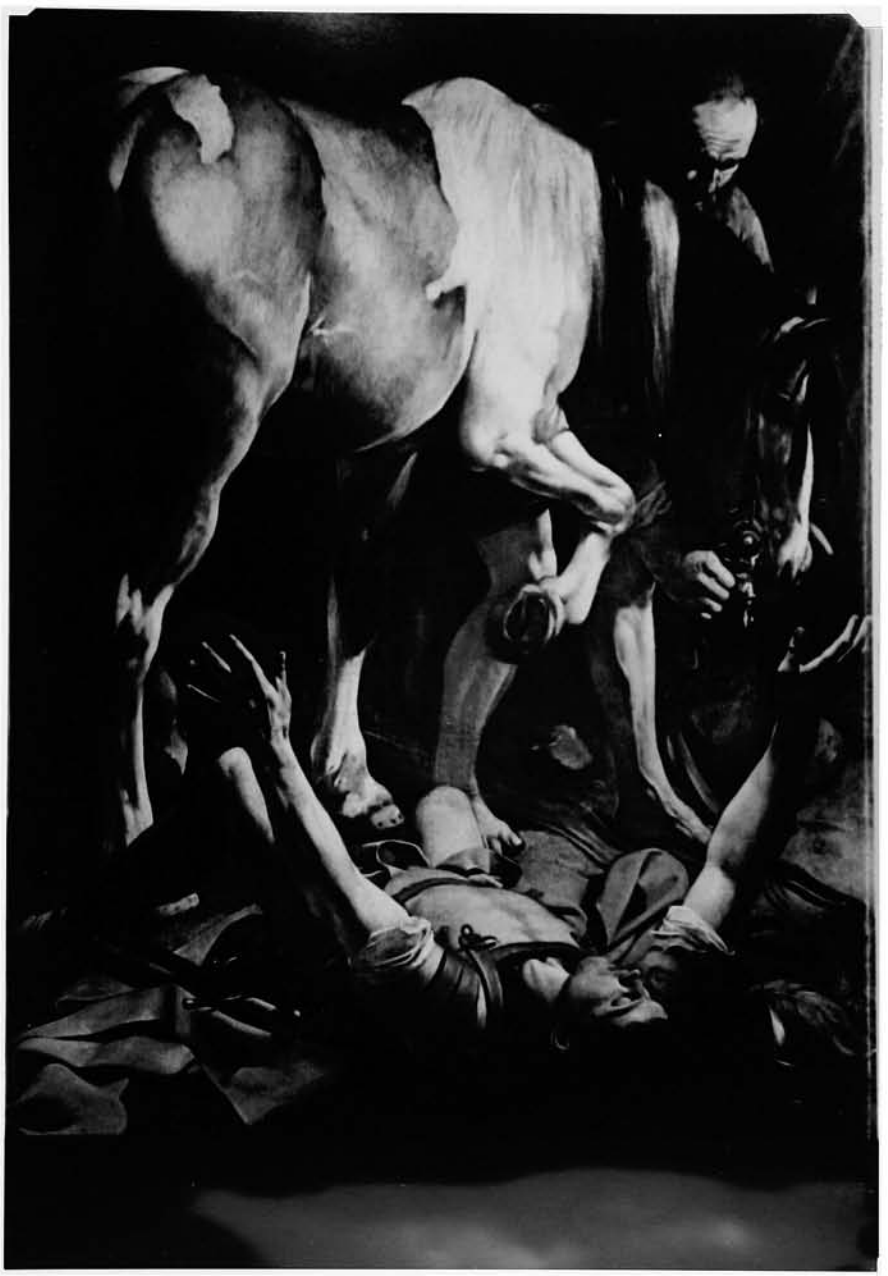

Figure 6. Caravaggio, Conversion of St. Paul, Oil on Canvas, c. 1642.

CHAPTER IV

REMBRANDT: MASTER OF LIGHT AND SHADOW

Chief among these followers and to a greater degree than any other, Rembrandt Van Rijn, the greatest artist of the Baroque North, developed the supreme gift of expressing essential dramatic points of theme by depicting them with a masterly treatment of light. He inherited indirectly the Roman realism, dramatic power and especially Caravaggio's mysterious interplay of light and shadow through the interest of his teachers.

Caravaggio's influence in Holland was so strong that a school of Dutch painters, the Utrecht Caravaggisti, was named after him. Some of its foremost exponents studied Caravaggio's pictures in Italy and exploited to their own tastes certain aspects of his technique with light and shadow. However, Rembrandt alone is acknowledged as the only 17th Century master of comparable stature to use light in any way approaching the uniqueness of Caravaggio.[22]

It is interesting to note that he, unlike the Caravaggisti, never visited Italy or even saw an original work of the master. Most probably he became his pupil indirectly through his first master Pieter Lastman, a noted Dutch painter who had been very much impressed with the Italian's adept handling of light and shadow. Although Rembrandt, ". . . remained in Lastman's studio for only six months . . . he quickly seized

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[22]Robert Wallace, The World of Rembrandt: 1606-1669 (New York: Time-Life Books Inc., 1968), pp. 25-33.

the chiaroscuro device and within a short time began to use it with a skill no other artist has ever surpassed."[23]

Light for him was never "simply another skein to be interwoven with color, composition, and space."[24] From his earliest stage of artistic development, Rembrandt sensed the danger of commitment to the seductive school of the Tenebrosi and seemed unwilling to risk fragmentation of form and loss of pattern. Thus, the chief reason for his superiority over his comtemporary pursuers of the drama of light was that he perceived it as a unifying, structural element.

In Rembrandt's work we find areas rather than edges frequently merging almost imperceptibly into one another and then with equal skill juxtaposed in sharp contrasts of light and dark. This mode of depiction is not merely an artist's technical device, it corresponds to a whole specific way of apprehending the purely visual image and being able to record impressions rather than objects.[25]

In reference to Rembrandt's chiaroscuro principles, Benesch states, "It is almost a miracle how the old Rembrandt, by dissolving the outer consistency of figures raises their inward reality . . . [his]. . . mastery of light brings this miracle about.[26]

If, in Rembrandt's treatment of light, we were to look for one identifying hallmark it would be his unique personal approach to all the

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[23]Wallace, op cit., p. 25.

[24]Michael Mahoney, "The Discovery of Night," Light: From Aten to Laser, eds. Thomas B. Hess and John Ashbury (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1969) p. 100.

[25]Margaret Playle (trans.), Rembrandt's Drawings, by Walter Scheidig (Boston Book and Art Shop, Inc., 1966, pp. 35-37.

[26]Otto Benesch, Rembrandt As a Draughtsman (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1960), p. 32.

subjects of his work. Whether depicting a Dutch landscape, a portrait, a milling crowd, a Christ or a beggar, he captures the complete heman drama contained in each pictorial representation. Some tangible artistic form of expression however, had to be the vehicle of this luminous humanizing quality; and he employed lights and shadows to effect this deep life-long concern.

> Rembrandt, from the beginning of his creative life, was more concerned with Man himself than with such artistic problems. He wanted to interpret man's features, his movements, his deeds, and to explain his shortcomings. Light and shade were welcome to give weight to the evidence.[27]

In reviewing his approach to the vast array of subjects he depicted, we are aware of this conscious control using "tangible qualities of the visual world: light, air, and shadow to evoke the mysteries of mind and spirit."[28]

LIGHT AND SHADOW IN LANDSCAPE

Working in the penumbra between bright illumination and total darkness, Rembrandt developed a pictorial space in his landscapes that appeared boundless. Details were not important, it was rather a "quiet, floating movement of space in the luminous immensity of the open air."[29] His skill is deceptive and one is not fully aware of how purposefully he sets the dark masses against the light. It is in no way an academic control, but presents a creative and illuminating force.

His landscape etching, "The Three Trees" (see Fig.7) is based on this dramatic play of light against dark. The trees are a dark mass

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[27]Scheidig, op. cit., p. 38. [28]Robert Wallace, op. cit., p. 41.

[29]Benesch, op. cit., p. 26.

Figure 7. REMBRANDT, The Three Trees, Etching, 8 1/4" x 11", 1643.

against the sky which is cut into along the top by strong sharp slanting lines. He uses them to shape the light patterns around the dark trees in the center. Even though they emerge from almost total darkness into light, the effect is not stark. There is full play of light and shadow within their foliage. The light of the sky is continued in the bit of reflection in the foreground stream and then "used as land light, as the artist with a few lines and an amazing sense of graduated distance, takes us across the whole flat land of Holland."[30] This flatness and control of spatial distance is explained technically as the result of the expert use of drypoint.[31]

PSYCHOLOGICAL ILLUMINATION OF PORTRAITURE

In this phase of his work Rembrandt applies his chiaroscuro principle with a sensitivity based on his love of humanity. Initially, Rembrandt made crude copper etchings of himself and his family. In these early works he treated the human element more directly, and somewhat in the style of Caravaggio's new realism.[32]

Progressively,

> . . . faces of children, beggars, of old women, youths . . . become more different, more important, more real, because of his expert handling of . . . the light and darkness which he fought and shaped to his purposes.[33]

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[30]Frank Getlein, "Introduction", The Complete Etchings of Rembrandt, eds., Bruce and Seena Harris (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1970), p. 7.

[31]Ibid. p. 7.

[32]Stephen Longstreet, A Treasury of the World's Great Prints (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1970), p. 60.

[33]Getlein, op. cit. p. 2.

Later instances of portraiture and character representations give evidence that his purposes of expression went even deeper. He tried, "not only to give material evidence of the surface . . . but to give colour and so goes further inwards, penetrating the surface. In this way he catches, so to speak, more of the subject's soul."[34]

To him light and darkness were realities and the borderline between them was psychologically and physiologically a continuous source of meditation.[35]

In his print "Faust and His Study" (see Fig. 8) we find the subject in a moment of illumination where,

> The magical disk glows against the light of all outdoors and makes sunlight through the windows seem dim . . . The living light given its quality from the repeated but irregular lines with which it is broken, glows in two places: The disk and its radiance and the form of Faust, the intensity of light is raised by the richly textured darkness.[36]

There is nothing of the false theatrical in his pictorial representation of the unfolding of this drama. He displays the light and dark of the etched plate around the central principles of his artistic life; the pursuit of truth through the practice of art.[37]

THE INNER LIGHT OF SPIRITUALITY IN REMBRANDT'S RELIGIOUS WORKS

This pursuit was taken up to a greater degree in his religious works. Rembrandt was not the last of the religious artists, but was part of the last generation when it was possible for great artists to find in Christianity, thematic material for their intellectual and

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[34]Benesch, op. cit. p. 24.

[35]Scheidig, op. cit. p. 45.

[36]Getlein, op. cit. p. 7.

[37]Ibid.

Figure 8. REMBRANDT, Faust in His Study, Etching, 8 1/4" x 6 5/16".

artistic fulfillment.

It was this artistic fulfillment that he experienced in his depiction of scenes from the Bible. As an artist devoted to revealing the human condition and with his rare ability to express what is beyond surface qualities, it is not surprising that he was so supremely able to fuse the human and divine characteristics with his mysteriously spiritual, yet so tangible, treatment of light.[38]

In his religious prints, "the whole emotional and intellectual burden . . . is carried not by line, but by the sharp contrasts of light and dark, and by the subtle shifting through the degrees of one or the other.[39]

Even in more delicate spiritual situations, his keen sensitivity to the use of this element is evident. In his small etchings of "The Childhood of Jesus", we find subtly dramatic chiaroscuro without any great contrasts of light and dark and yet even within that narrower range, Rembrandt was able to convey his complete expression.

In his most powerfully controlled composition of light, Rembrandt created, beyond doubt, his most famous and probably best-loved print, "Christ Healing the Sick." (See Fig. 9) Although this etching combines several incidents of the gospel story, it suffers no loss of pattern or fragmentation of form. "In the shadow of the city wall of Jerusalem Christ preaches; the light goes forth into the darkness and the whole composition moves from both sides to the preacher."[40]

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[38]Owen S. Rachleff, Rembrandt's Life of Christ, (New York: Abradale Press, 1966) p. xx.

[39]Getlein, op. cit. p. 8. [40]Ibid. p. 9.

Figure 9, REMBRANDT, Christ Healing the Sick, Etching, 15 1/2" x 11 1/16", c. 1648-1650

Carel Weight comments that,

> . . . . the deeply shadowed faces of the men on either side . . . are infused with luminous reflections that allow us to see the whole masks . . . only for deliberate dramatic effect does Rembrandt allow this to happen, as with the head of the on-looker who peers forward between Jesus and the disciples. Here the fragmentary effect of light is justified, for the diminution of the man's symbolic identity serves as a contrast with the fully revealed humanity of Christ.[41]

It gains its profundity and significance from the "dark, featureless masses from which the subject matter burns incandescently, like a vision."[42]

The entire effect of the chiaroscuro principle in Rembrandt's religious works might be summed up in "his faithful adherence to the Gospel and the reverence he manifested through line, color, and light and shade, by brush stroke, pen point, and etcher's needle."[43]

LIGHT: EXPRESSED THROUGH INTAGLIO

Regardless of the tool, Rembrandt was able to successfully incorporate his major stylistic principle of light. But this technique reached sublime development in his prints which are believed, by most authorities, to be matched only by a few and surpassed by none.

As a printmaker he took advantage of the limitless possibilities of tonal range as yet undiscovered, and worked out his etching as an exciting and independent art with its own peculiar effects. His shading was free rather than schematized. There was a great development of light and shade by means of combining dry point with pure etching, and also through his practice of hand-wiping the plates so as to produce the tints

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[41]Weight, op. cit., p. 18. [42]Longstreet, op. cit., p. 63.

[43]Rachleff, op. cit., p. xx.

which dissolved into that mysterious spatial qualities which is characteristic of his best prints. Specifically, the two most outstanding possibilities of etching technique that Rembrandt used as exceptionally delicate instruments of expression were, the method of working directly on the plate and the extension of the light and dark ranges. The first was achieved by the ease with which he moved his needle through the ground; the second by controlled timing of the various parts of the exposed plate in acid. The rich burr of drypoint added to both effects.[44]

> The etchings he made were magnificent . . . and his masterpieces were direct honest battles of light and dark, mind and matter . . . They also rank him with the peers of line of his day . . .[45]

Here we must note that it is his skill as a draftsman which allowed him to discover the internal structure of compositional light and shadow in his prints. Drawing, it must be remembered, was the foundation of Rembrandt's whole art. It was the moving principle of all his artistic communications.[46] Thus, it is not surprising to find it as the source of his expressions of light and dark. Otto Benesch states that, Rembrandt, ". . . with certain scrawls and scribbles and irregular strokes without outline made a 'deep chiaroscuro of great vigor' and picturesque flavor."[47] Then of several nude studies, Benesch adds,

> He develops the illuminated figure out of a whole symphony of different shadows . . . Brush, sharp quill, and broad reed pen are working . . . to attain a rich and picturesque totality. These drawings represent perhaps the summit of Rembrandt's chiaroscuro principle.[48]

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[44] Getlein, op. cit., p. 5.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Benesch, op. cit., p. 31.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., p. 24.

Walter Schiedig aptly summarized some of the aforementioned qualities concerning Rembrandt's drawing when he commented that, ". . . he thought graphically."[49] Since only a few of his drawings served as a direct preparation for his paintings or etchings, the connections between his thought processes and their delineations explain the direct application in his work.[50]

In this, Rembrandt set a new precedent, "Henceforward not the mere perfection of a work of art in an external sense became the aim of artistic effort but the perfection in the internal one: a work of art must be a self-contained organism."[51]

Perhaps it is Rembrandt's rare perception of, and adherence to, this simple truth which enabled him to manipulate so masterfully the delicate nuances of compositional light structure without sacrificing the totality of pictorial representation and expression.

Although the successors of Rembrandt's techniques in drawing, painting, and etching are legion, for the remainder of this research we will concern ourselves only with certain masters, who, intrigued with the power of light, developed it as an artistic vehicle of unique expression.

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[49]Schiedig, op. cit., p.32. [50]Ibid. [51]Benesch, op.cit., p. 33.

CHAPTER V

GOYA

In the intaglio media the Spanish artist, Francisco Goya stands out in bold relief against many other of his contemporaries because of his dramatically different personal approach. Although his technique did not reach the superlative excellence of craftsmanship that was Rembrandt's, his creative use of light sprang from, and reached its pinnacle in his intensely passionate desire to express his denunciations of what he felt to be decadent in the society in which he lived. "His personal ensemble was of the rarest and few feel impelled to express similar ideas in any media . . ."[52]

Though Goya worked primarily in paint until a later period in his life, no specific media seemed as important to him as the ability to express his very haunting visual images. His own words give truth to this fact. "I find that neither lines nor colors exist in nature--only light and shade. I see only illuminated bodies and planes in relief and planes in recession, projections and hollows."[53] This is a sweeping generalization and can easily be contradicted by other painters and examples, but it was certainly true for Goya especially in what is called his "black period." It was at this time when an illness left him almost totally deaf that the dramatic contrast of dark against light became a

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[52]E. S. Lumsden, The Art of Etching (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1962) p. 252.

[53]Thomas Craven, Men of Art (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1931), p. 326.

vitally important means of expression.

There are evidences here of this style developing from the dramatically lit works of the Italians, Piranesi and Tiepolo. But Goya persistently reiterates his artistic independence acknowledging only, ". . . nature, Velasquez and Rembrandt."[54] as his three masters.

Early in his career, we find this urgent desire for self-expression in his painting of the "Feast of San Isidro" where he first showed signs of discarding all previous formulas and habit. ". . . and broke through to achieve breadth, harmony and simplicity in handling composition."[55] He worked primarily on a dark ground, which at times was almost black and dashed in the light with broad strokes giving great vigor and pictorial power to the work. He varied his paint in thickness according to light and shade. The forms were strongly modeled but the shadows were subtly, imperceptibly blended with no evidence of sharp division.[56]

In his last years when he turned to the stark black and white of the graphic media, his masterful use of light and shadow reaches its peak in the composition of his etchings and aquatints.

> The imagination of Goya and his unfailing observation, his sense of terror and of comedy, come altogether, to the front, in his performance upon the copper--in his several hundred prints.[57]

Although the combination of tone with etching was not completely new, a satisfactory ground for the aquatint had only recently been invented. However, Goya with his usual artistic daring seized this opportunity to

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[54]Bernard Myers, Goya (London: Spring Books Ltd., 1964), p. 22.

[55]Ibid. p. 9. [56]Myers, op. cit., p. 10. [57]Craven, op. cit.

experiment with tonal patterns of light and shade and created a new mode of dramatic expression.[58] Printmaking history owes much to him for he influenced its development considerably in this creative use of the technique of aquatint.

Among his earlier prints depicting the traditional Spanish bull fights (see Fig. 10) we find some that are very notable for their beautiful arrangements of light and shadow. But it is in Goya's series entitled "The Disasters of War", (see Figs. 11 and 12) that he reaches the summit of his use of chiaroscuro.[59] "Nowhere else does he display such mastery of form and movement, such dramatic gestures and appalling effects of light and darkness."[60]

E. S. Lumsden in his book, The Art of Etching states, "So far as I know nothing approaching them in sheer undiluted horror has ever been done on copper and in spite of this the compositions are artistically vital."[61] Probably this is because Goya, like Rembrandt, never sacrificed the basic principles of structure for the sake of dramatic expression. Rather, this skillful use of tonal patterns creates a unique quality of compositional strength.

That this series was so powerfully telling yet compositionally perfect is reiterated by Paul Sachs when he considered Goya as one of the the firsts in modern graphic art. He comments,

> Goya's style though inspired by Rembrandt and Tiepolo, is completely his own. If he had only done "Disasters of War", . . . this would assure him of immortality. He transformed terrifying nightmares into works of art that are permanent

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[58] Lumsden, op. cit., p. 246.

[59] Ibid., p. 252.

[60] Craven, op. cit., p. 338.

[61] Lumsden, op. cit. p. 246.

Figure 10. FRANCISCO GOYA, Spanish Diversion, Lithograph, 11 7/8" x 16 1/4", 1825.

Figure 11. GOYA, Tampoco, (Disasters of War Series), Etching, 5 3/8" x 7 1/2", c. 1810.

Figure 12. GOYA, Las Resultas, (Disasters of War Series), Etching, 5 3/8" x 7 1/2", c. 1810.

and imperishable, that transcend his period and his time.[62]

Few prints produced in that era matched the quality of Goya's in the use of light and shade. In fact, he influenced no school of followers with his printmaking technique, unique though it was. Much of this was due to the tragic mishandling of his plates by successive printers and also the fact that most of it was the combination of etching and aquatint, a medium toward which few felt sympathetic.[63]

However, in the field of pure etching, E. S. Lumsden cites two notable printmakers of that era, who greatly influenced by Rembrandt, produced chiaroscuro etchings of considerable merit. They were Marius Bauer and Jacques Forain. Lumsden speaks of his contemporary, Bauer, as,

> "... one of the greatest masters of etching. . . extraordinarily versatile in the treatment of his plates and can vary his scale with equal facility. Every one of them is full of intense human feeling and deep emotion. I think no one living can approach Bauer in the luminosity and pattern of broad shadows seen in such monumental plates as "The Entrance to a Mosque", . . . and "The Entry of a Queen."[64]

The latter, he claims, has never been surpassed even by Rembrandt.

Forain, like Bauer, follows Rembrandt very closely, but he resembles the Dutchman even more in the style of his draftsmanship. His masterfully executed plates depict the dramatic scenes which took place daily in the courts of law.. For the insight into this subject he was deeply indebted to his great French predecessor, Honore Daumier. Like Daumier, he had much to say about social institutions, the failures of his fellow men, and about wars; but none of his etchings exhibit the

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[62]Paul Sachs, Modern Prints and Printmakers. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf) 1954, p.6.

[63]Lumsden, op. cit., p. 254.

[64]Lumsden, op. cit.,p. 314.

power of dramatic lighting comparable to Daumier's lithographs.[65]

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[65]Sachs, op. cit., p. 34.

CHAPTER VI

DAUMIER

Daumier preceded Forain by fifty years and was one of those rare contemplative mortals who remained outside the swirl of professional currents raging about him. He rebelled against academic restraints and studied independently, the masters of the Renaissance, Rembrandt, and the sculpture of Michaelangelo.

> ". . . Few of his contemporaries appreciated how rewarding was his study of the art of the past. From Michaelangelo he learned the construction of massive form; from Rembrandt, dramatic intensity through the pictorial and emotional use of light and shade."[66]

Honore Daumier was an idealist; he felt himself called upon to rouse the French citizens from their lethargy so that they might, through him, learn to distinguish between true and false ideals. Consequently, he worked diligently to master his technique, for he could not conceive of art as a thing removed from experience. This humane insight into the daily drama of life which we have seen exhibited before by previous masters of light and shade no doubt led him to see the value of using this vehicle for expressions of his visual satire.

> In his paintings, drawings and lithographs he restricted himself to simple characteristic forms and revealed a preference for harsh ciaroscuro effects, which he combined with an economical use of color. These essentially graphic techniques lent a degree of force to his Parisian scenes that raises them far above the episodic level of straightforward caricature.[67]

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[66] Ibid., p. 9.

[67] Sachs, op. cit., p. 9.

Here we see evidence of how, in the hands of a disciplined artist, light as an element basic to compositional structure can transform mere illustration into a true work of art.

When war came to France his great sensitivity to his suffering fellow man inspired him to create, what is called, "The most powerful history of the disasters of war since Callot and Goya. His style became the simple black stroke, a scrawl of an angry stick of crayon, dropping all artistic trimming."[68] It is in these last powerful prints that he, "achieved monumental effects with human bodies in light. Tragic, dramatic, almost drawn in gall, his prints portray both the dignity of man and his wretchedness."[69]

The "Rue Transnonain" (see Fig. 13) is considered by many to be Daumier's greatest lithograph. This scene depicts a family, attired only in night clothes exterminated in a police raid as they fled from their beds in terror. This subject was a perfect vehicle for the masterful handling of light and shadow.

> A stark shaft of light across the center of the picture combines the confusion of the bedclothes with bayoneted corpse . . . on the left the shadows seem peaceful and calm behind the glare of massacre in the center of the picture.[70]

The solidity in this picture is derived from his previously mentioned studies of Michaelangelo and the dramatic intensity inherited from Rembrandt. But its depth of emotion is rendered with a certainty in the tonal patterns that is characteristic only of Daumier.

His art, like that of the masters before him, is living testimony to the profound importance of the respect of the artist toward his subject

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[68]Longstreet, op. cit., p. 212. [69]Ibid., p. 215.

[70]Frank and Dorothy Getlein, "An Appreciation", Honore Daumier: Selected Works, eds. Bruce and Seena Harris (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1969), p. xix.

Figure 13. HONORE' DAUMIER, Rue Transnonain, Lithograph, 11 1/2" x 17 5/8", 1834.

matter, and to the great benefits of well-grounded convictions concerning his method of composition.

CHAPTER VII

OROZCO

The monumentally illuminated forms of Daumier are probably nowhere again matched until the best graphic works of the Western Hemisphere which appeared in the form of the mural paintings and and lithographs of the Mexican artist Orozco. His importance to this research lies in his background study of aesthetics and the forms of Italian mural painting, and also the passionate concern he expresses for the poor and oppressed much of which he depicted in strong contrasting patterns of light and dark.

Orozco was a proud, quiet man whose business was art and whose life was devoid of theatrics. Of his own memoirs he wrote: "There is nothing of special interest in it . . . only the uninterrupted and tremendous efforts of a Mexican painter to learn his trade and find opportunities to practice it."[71]

He was a vigorously trained artist who slowly developed a powerful style, firmly based on academic discipline, and resulting in monumentally great impressions which shook the modern art world.

"The spiritual fervor and profound understanding of the tragic sufferings of man, which are the special characteristics of Orozco's genius have been lost to mural art since the early Italians."[72]

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[71]John Palmer Leeper, "An Introduction, " Jose Clemente Orozco: An Autobiography, (Trans.) Robert C. Stephenson (Austin: University of Texan Press, 1962),p. xvii.

[72]Craven, op. cit., p. 54.

His achievement in terms of meaning and function, structure, and draftmanship, in human significance and social criticism puts to shame the combined efforts of his modern European contemporaries.[73]

Out of this disciplined concept of art, Orozco produced a chiaroscuro of integrity and strength, with the entirely fresh approach of a new world artist.

Of the many works which exemplify this none other equals his fresco "Man of Flames" in the cupola of the Salon de Actos in Guadalajara.

> Having treated history and the various aspects of life and development, he crowns and summarizes all with this allegory of the human condition. Three dark figures each in a different posture (three different attitudes to life) form a circle through which a central figure soars, a man consumed by flames. His is the final answer: to live is to burn oneself up. There are no parallels in world art for this conception. It is Orozco's masterpiece and a supreme achievement of the Twentieth Century.[74]

Another of his works, an oil painting entitled "Peace" (see Fig. 14), typifies his monumental treatment of chiaroscuro. The strong design of light and dark and the carefully structured tonal patterns clarifies the reason for the characteristic integrity underlying all the works of this great Twentieth Century artist.

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[73]Craver, op. cit., p. 511.

[74]Justino Fernandez, Mexican Art (London: Spring Books, Inc., 1965), p. 42.

Figure 14. JOSE' CLEMENTE OROZCO, Peace, Oil on Canvas.

CHAPTER VIII

PICASSO

The timeless quality of great art finds its expression in those works of art which exhibit good solid principles of design, composition, and draftsmanship. This was felt by the author, Lumsden to be the reason why so few great modern printmakers remained to be mentioned in his very complete book, The Art of Etching. But much has developed since its publication in 1924 where he makes a scant notation of a few very "interesting etchings of high rank by the Spanish-born Pablo Picasso."[75]

In the perspective of history Picasso may, perhaps not take his place with the enthroned giants of the past, but, "The judgment of time upon the ultimate place of our living artists is something we cannot know." Lumsden could not know how the Spanish-born Picasso would be later acknowledged by most as he is here by Paul Sachs as, "The most influential, the most inventive, the greatest of living artists in either his graphic style or his daring experimentation."[76] Based on the truth of this statement this research on lighting techniques must find itself in evidence here.

Of the approximately one hundred fifty prints in Picasso's prolific career one of the earliest, and perhaps best known of his etchings is "The Frugal Repast," (see Fig. 15). It is a masterfully woven pattern of light that holds this composition in perfect emotional restraint.

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[75]Lumsden, op. cit., p. 323.

[76]Sachs, op. cit., p. 2.

Figure 15. PABLO PICASSO, The Frugal Repast, Etching, 18 3/16" x 14 3/16", c. 1906.

In another of his early prints using a dramatic lighting effect, Picasso shows again the deep affinity of a master artist for the affliction of his fellow men. The etching entitled "The Poor" has a family of figures silhouetted against a dimly lit sky where a few light parallel strokes create sharp contrast with the gloomy earth below. The total effect is much like the above mentioned print, a powerfully restrained sense of human drama.[77]

For over sixty years Picasso has worked and experimented with almost every graphic media, etching, aquatint, drypoint, engraving and lithograph. In these he displays a many-sided genius in an endless succession of unique styles. Therefore when he chose to use an expressive device such as the chiarascuro technique, he does so with startling individuality.

One of his greatest examples of this is "The Satyr and Sleeping Woman." (See Fig. 16) Here we find,

> . . . complete mastery of the technique of aquatint, where line and tone combine to "paint" the picture. The contrasts of light and dark are dramatic; as the satyr uncovers the sleeping female nude, strong sunshine lights part of her body. Etched lines are combined with the tonal areas, and in the satyr's head the detailed treatment results in a startling representation.[78]

Picasso himself gave the following definition of the artist's function: "A painter paints to unload himself of feelings and visions."[79] If the word painter is changed to printmaker the statement still has great validity, for in the unprecedented variety of his graphic works he has given us many insights into his feelings and visions. It is especially,

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[77]Wechsler, op. cit., p. 226.

[78]Wechsler, op. cit., p. 230.

[79]Ibid., p. 224.

Figure 16. PICASSO, Satyr and Sleeping Woman, Etching and Aquatint, 12 1/2" x 16 1/2", 1936.

then, when this vision is translated into patterns of light and shade that Picasso takes his place among the great masters of that powerful device of dramatic expression.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF RESEARCH

Expression is a very ambiguous word and can be used to denote direct emotional reactions. But the very discipline or restraint by which an artist achieves form is in itself a mode of expression. This research has revealed that the highly disciplined yet creatively inventive use of light is the structural artistic form basic to many of the world's greatest expressions of pictorial art.

The study of certain master artists who employed light as such a means of dramatic expression yielded the following conclusions:

1. Inspiration and influence of previously seen works may create an awareness in the power of light as a tool of composition but it is the artist's unique approach which gives us the endless variety of examples in existence today.

2. Sensitivity of the artist toward his subject matter and media dictated the manner of applying the principle of light and shade. Never since the early chiaroscuro woodcut do we see it used by master artists merely as a technical device or experiment.

3. Inherent in all the works studied was a marked consideration for the surface pattern of the picture plane and a deep respect for the element of light as a basic means of unifying structural force. Emotional impact and dramatic qualities were always subservient to composition and pictorial expression.

4. For the artist particularly concerned with the use of dramatic lighting and chiaroscuro, the medium of intaglio afforded the greatest amount of tonal range, while the high degree of skill and craftsmanship displayed by the master printmakers resulted in the maximum control and utilization of the element of light in pictorial composition.

In summary, each of these artists evinced masterful control of the dramatic lighting in chiaroscuro because of the primary importance he placed upon his personal expression of the subject within a framework of disciplined adherence to the essence of basic structural composition.

PART II

THESIS PROJECT

CHAPTER I

IDEAS AND THEMES

In the approach to my thesis project the influence of research conclusions led to a careful consideration of a choice of subject matter. Convinced that incorporation of light in my intaglio prints should grow out of a universally human, yet spiritual theme, I began searching for ideas relevant to this. This consideration, in addition to the proposal of a series of four plates, resulted in the theme of this thesis project.

Life and its many beautiful and mysterious cycles seemed the most appropriate subject, providing a wide range of ideas and pictorial inspiration. The appeal of the subject matter lay in the possibility of the following plan of dramatic light patterns and pictorial compositions.

The first preparatory drawing (see Fig. 17) was composed around the concepts of early light, specifically dawn. The remaining pictorial content consisted of images of human birth, animal metamorphosis, and seedling plant life. Based on my own convictions that strong draftsmanship forms the basis of good pictorial composition, the ideas and images were drawn, redrawn, composed and recomposed until a satisfactory composition of dawning light was filtered through the central images of newborn life and the vertical shaft of a young spring tree. It was not until this point that the lines of the tree suggested the veining of a butterfly wing and the entire concept of new life was heightened. Tissue overlays were made to determine light and dark areas according to the principal drawing. These simulated the future stages of etching and aquatint.

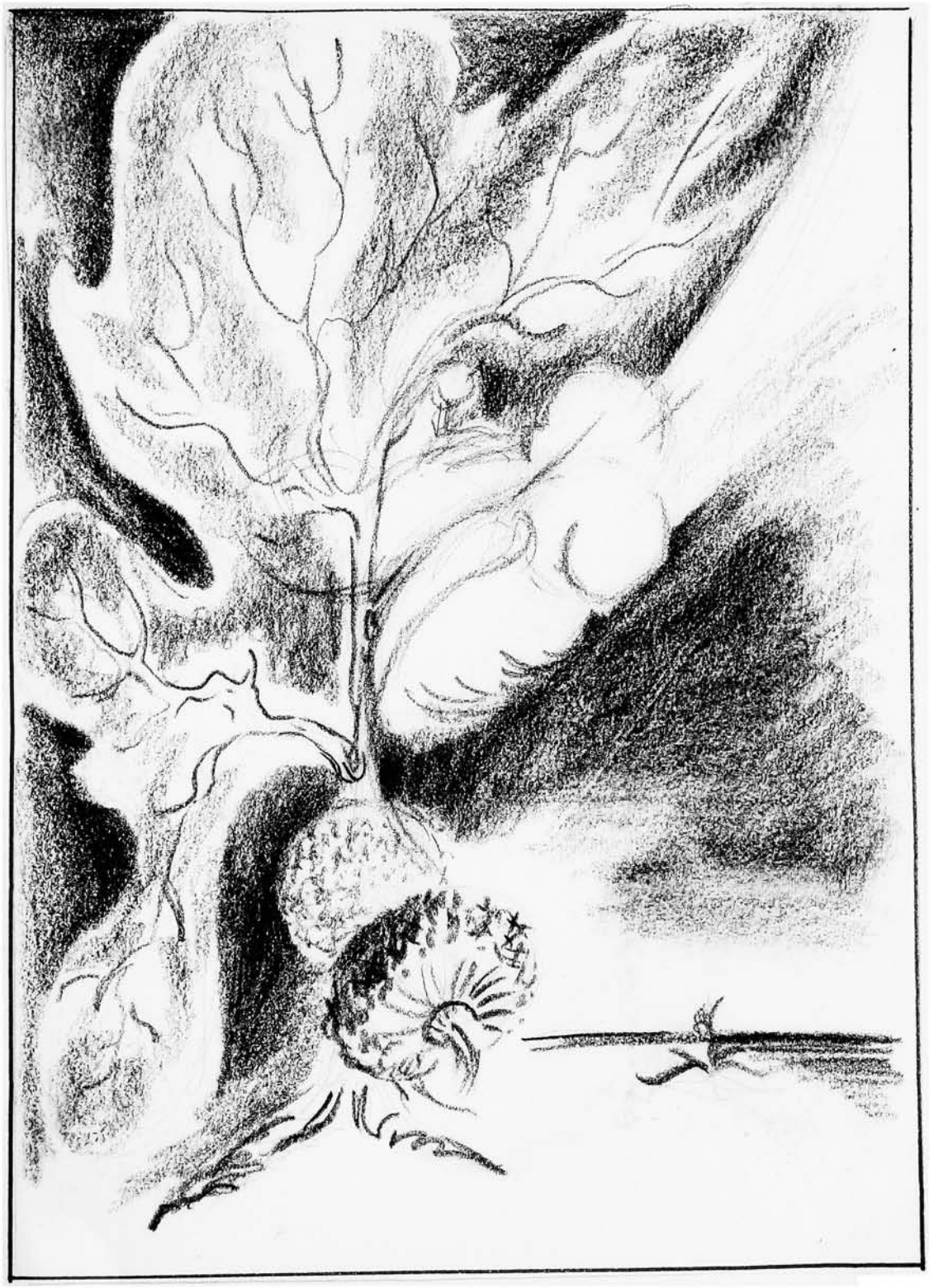

Figure 17. Preparatory compositional drawing for Print No. 1.

The second drawing (see Fig. 18) depicted the high noon light of summer, and human life in the full light of childhood's joyous relationship with nature. Since a tree was the central image in the first drawing, it was decided to employ them throughout the series. Consequently, many studies and drawings were accumulated as resource material for the engraving of the plates. (See Figs. 19, 20, 21)

The remaining set of compositions for the third and fourth prints were a very natural, logical flow of thematic imagery; an Autumn sunset revealing the mature stages of human growth, (see Fig. 22) and finally, night and winter with the images of waning, yet hopeful, human life reflected in the dying light of a candle. (See Fig. 23)

The theme of the entire series can be described as a revelation of light as it passes through the hours of the day, the seasons of the year, and follows the continuous cycle of life, growth, death, and resurrection.

With these ideas and drawings serving as strong inspiration, I began the actual plate work in the first summer session of June, 1972.

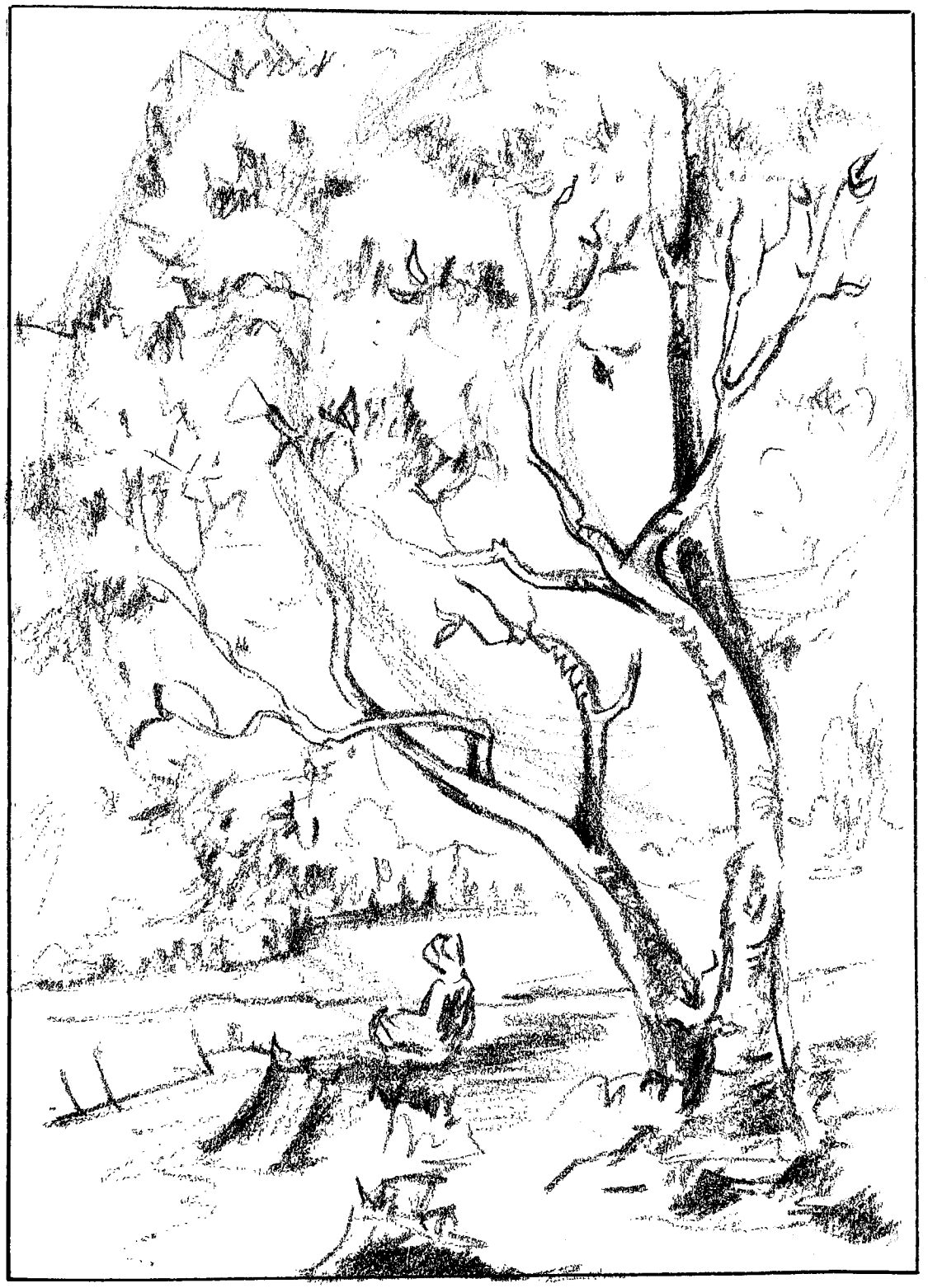

Figure 18. Preparatory compositional drawing for Print No. 2.

Figure 19. Tree Study.

Figure 20. Tree Study.

Figure 21. Tree Study.

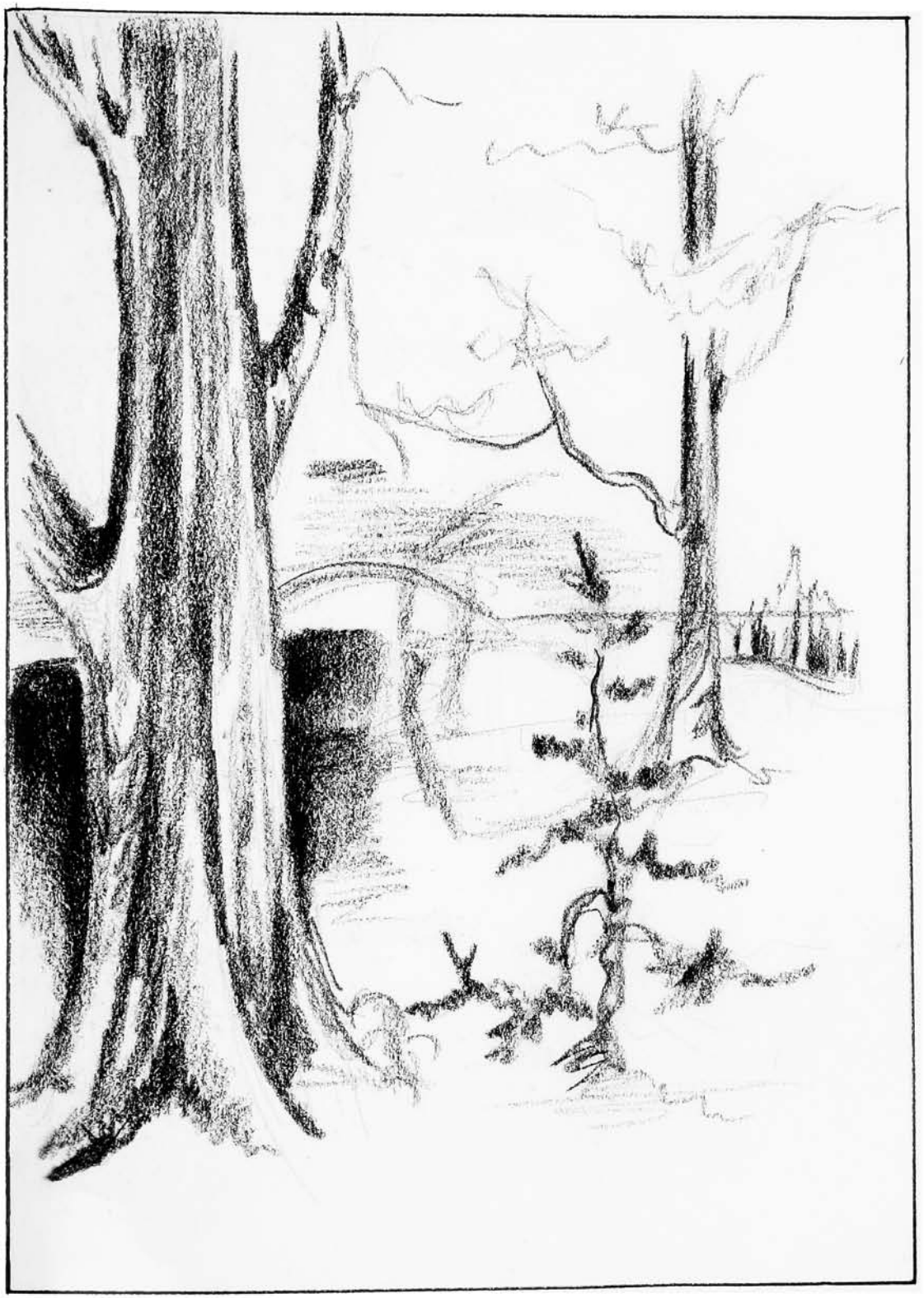

Figure 22. Preparatory compositional drawing for Print No. 3.

Figure 23. Preparatory compositional drawing for Print No. 4.

CHAPTER II

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Facing the prospect of completing four large prints with editions of each in a five week summer session, I realized that in order to successfully convey my concepts of pictorial light in the intaglio medium I had to systematize my procedures and limit my choice of techniques to a select few.

Preferring the directness and clarity of the engraved line, I chose the beautiful linear quality of this technique to create strong basic compositions and the flexibility of aquatinting for rich tones of light and shadow. The simplicity of this technical approach unified the individual designs of the series while permitting greater compositional freedom and time for concentration on the main point of this thesis i.e., the pictorial expression of dramatic lighting in the print.

The specific methods and techniques used for each plate are described consecutively in this section for the purpose of clarity.

PRINT NO. 1

Having engraved the basic drawing of a spring tree woven together with the small emergences of human life, I stopped out the area above the tree branches into the shape of a butterfly wing and with approximately ten minute and minute-and-a-half bitings produced the subtle and filmy tones desired in this area which was completed satisfactorily in the first proof. (See Fig. 24)

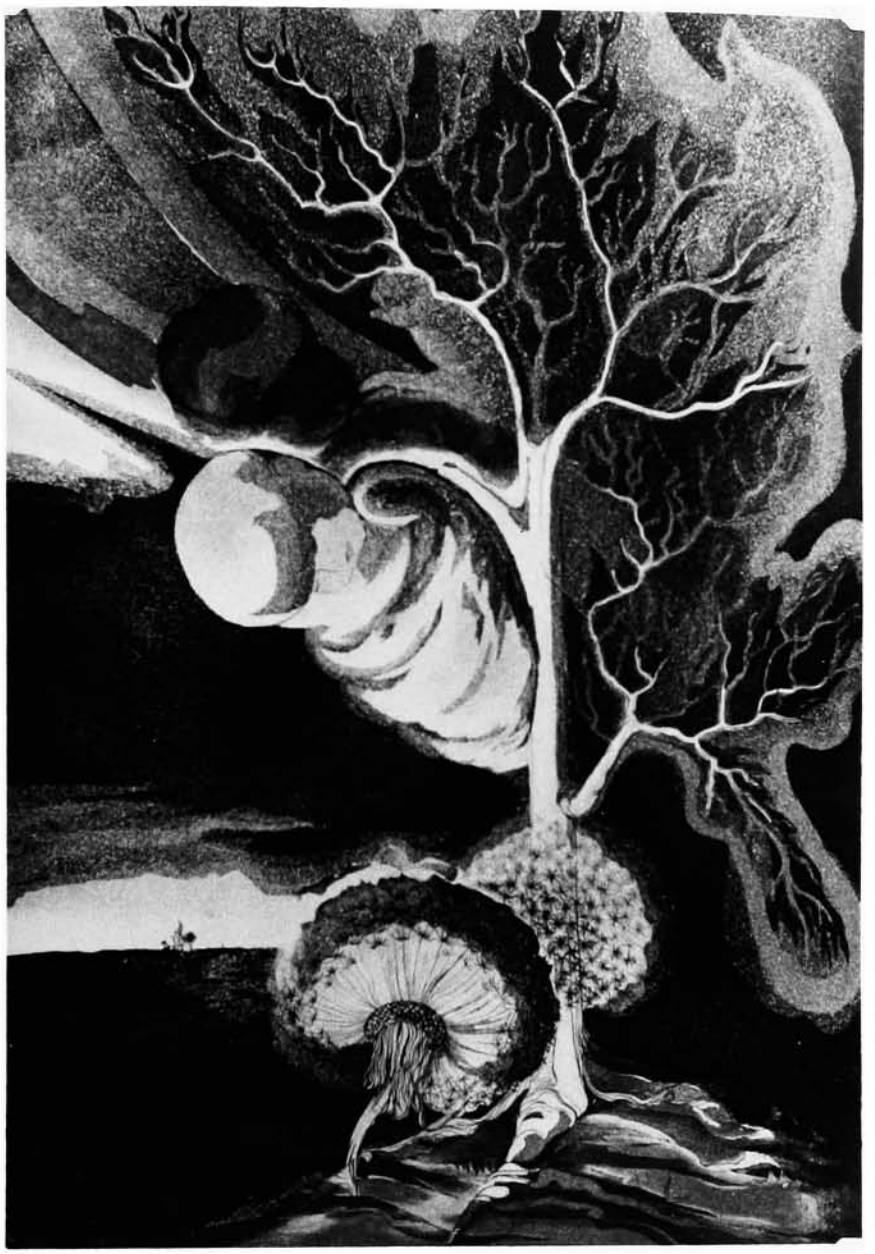

Figure 24. AUTHOR, Dawn of Being, Engraving and Aquatint, 16" x 24", 1972.

As the tones in the lower portion of the composition were increased with successive aquatints the major design of light with its linear qualities was preserved with hard ground. In the second proof the image of the second figure appeared stark and doll-like and for purposes of composition it was necessary to drop it further into the background with a series of light aquatints. This was corrected by the third proofing.

Finally the lower portion and area surrounding the tree roots were softened with aquatint and the patterns of light burnished up to parallel the softness of the wing effect above. Detailed engraving of the dandelion seedlings provided the finishing touch and produced the fourth and final proof to be pulled. In it then, the design of light is composed of the diagonal positions of the infants, the vertical shaft of the tree and stabilized by the luminous area of dawn breaking over the horizon.

This print set the tone for the series, in as much as it contained my basic approaches to the problem of light, i.e., establishing a well drawn composition with light patterns pre-arranged on the plate, followed by a freer working of the other areas. I found that this produced interesting and exciting tones which could be deepened with aquatint or lightened by a gradual polishing with the burnisher. Most often the latter part was not overly schematized and I was able to add subtle imagery and mystery to the print without loss of composition.

PRINT NO. 2

Drawing preparation for this print which was to symbolize the summertime of youth and the light of high noon, presented the greatest challenge to imagery. (See Fig. 25) A tree in full bloom silhouetted against a brilliant sky provided a compositional beginning while the figure of a small child communing with nature completed the pictorial framework for new patterns of light. Though simple enough, the reality of this scene presented the danger of mere illustration and prompted greater creativity in the execution of technique.

The plate was begun with a careful engraving of the tree and its summer foliage. Next the aquatint was applied with a pattern of three concentric circles for the purpose of creating a sensation of radiating heat and sunlight. A one minute bite which printed up too dark required a great amount of scraping and burnishing in order to regain the brilliance desired for the background. It was then necessary to create an irregular pattern with the polishing to break the edges of the circles and repattern the light. Once the background had progressed to this point it was stopped out and the tree and leaves were darkened with five successive aquatints. When this proof was pulled the trees and foliage needed only a few finishing touches and I began work on the foreground area which still lacked contrasting darks needed to heighten the impression of noonday light. Four to five aquatints with additional engraving of detailed foreground linear patterns completed the major pictorial composition.

The last problem involved in this plate concerned a segment of imagery versus the light pattern. The nebulous figure of a second child

Figure 25. AUTHOR, Crest of Youth, Engraving and Aquatint, 16" x 24", 1972.

stood next to the foreground tree which figured centrally in the composition. His body, if rendered realistically would have diverted the design of light from its graceful path along the line of the tree. It was decided to retain the image in a transparent manner by indicating his form while preserving the activity of light in the background. The experiment was successful and produced a mysterious effect with the figure which actually enhanced the pictorial content. After this had been accomplished the print was finished.

The design of light in this print is an all encompassing one set off by the dark yet delicate tracery of summer foliage. Of the entire series I felt it best captured the feeling of glowing luminosity while only subtly revealing the direct source of its brilliance.

PRINT NO. 3

The workings of this plate were perhaps the most logical in so far as the light pattern that was predetermined received little or no change from the original drawing. (See Fig. 26) It was rather the imagery which prompted flexibility in the tonal range as it progressed. Combining the three basic ideas of Autumn, sunset, and human maturity according to the first preparatory drawing, I engraved the initial design and then decided to "gamble" on a different aquatinting experiment to create additional light patterns. A cluster of real oak leaves were arranged on the plate in gradation of size around the central design and sprayed in two different positions for aquatint. (See Fig. 27) Then some of the trees and engraved leaves were stopped out as biting proceded. The results were most gratifying with delicate and subtle leaf patterns weaving a secondary light design which captured the glow of the setting sun.

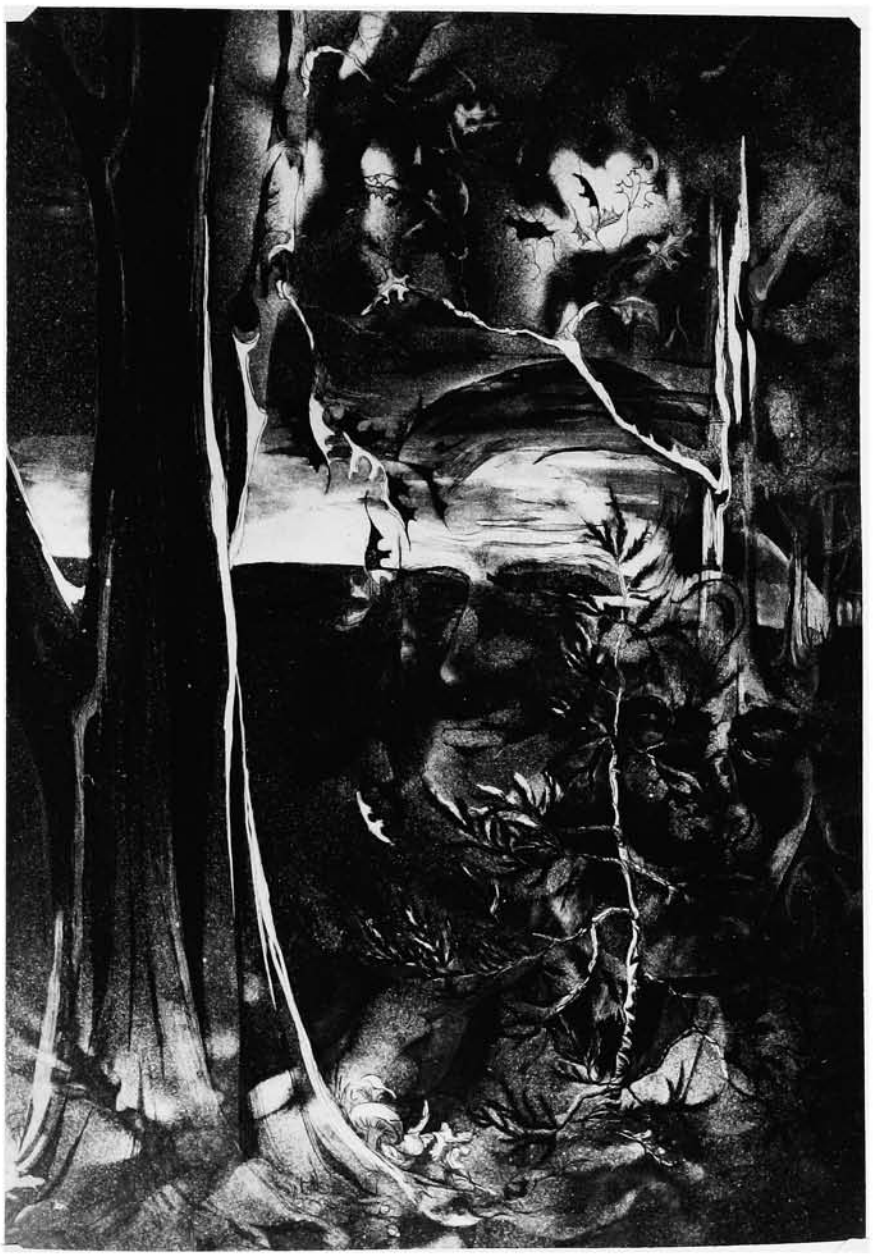

Figure 26. AUTHOR, Dusk of Maturity, Engraving and Aquatint, 16" x 24", 1972

Figure 27. Diagram illustrating aquatint leaf pattern arrangement.

For the second proofing I concentrated on the unification of the design by strengthening the tree and facial images. Once this was completed it was decided that an even greater depth and mystery could be attained by the introduction of a second face where it seemed to suggest itself amoung the foliage. This also related to the double human image evident in the two preceding prints. (See Fig. 28) Aquatint and successive burnishing completed the major design concept.

The light desigh in this print, though less defined than the others, balanced itself into a pleasing informal arrangement. Beginning with the largest oak tree, it is carries upward into the foliage by the various aquatint patterns and as it follows the sunset it gives a mysterious glow to the two facial images below. It finally returns to light up the details at the base of the same tree.

PRINT NO. 4

The fourth and last plate received a very systematic beginning. (See Fig. 29) After the usual engraving and seven staged aquatints, its first proof yielded a rather flat and schematized illustration of an old man gazing out upon a cold and equally flat landscape. However, the basic composition was present and provided adequate foundation for experimentation in light patterning.

First, I surface bit the window section in order to set it aside in depth. The details of the trees were etched to give moderate amount of form but purposely not engraved so as to preserve their distance. Next, I began to give serious consideration to the lighting. Since this print was to depict night, darkness, and approaching death, no part of the polished plate surface had been saved in the aquatinting. It was

Figure 28. DETAIL from the print, Dusk of Maturity, AUTHOR.

Figure 29. AUTHOR, Night of Life, Engraving and Aquatint, 16" x 24", 1972.

suggested that I avoid the ordinary--light radiating in a circle from the candle or following the linear form of the figure. So patterns were again cut (snowflakes, stars, and trees) and sprayed in different intensities. The effect on the window was perfect but the interior remained too cluttered with a superfluity of conflicting patterns. There followed four different attempts to eradicate the unwanted forms. With the window section and small parts of the foreground stopped out, the plate was aquatinted and left in the acid for ten, fifteen and twenty minutes consecutively. On the fourth proof I finally reached the "Rembrandtian" darkness I envisioned. Some very light and deliberate burnishing softly lit the star of hope on the horizon and scattered the dying light of the candle to warm the figure in unexpected intervals.

The story of light in this print was of particular importance since its message was not one of unconquerable darkness but rather of the power to light the star of hope in each man. This is exemplified by the basic structure of light emerging from darkness. The glow of the light of hope in life reflects that same life with a depth which can only come from darkness. Therefore I deliberately created a light which emerges from a totally darkened plate and while the pattern is not easily definable it expresses completely, as does his smile, that light in the darkness which <u>is</u> hope. (See Fig. 30)

Figure 30. DETAIL from the print, Night of Life, AUTHOR.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Line, form, color, and texture are commonly known as the four basic elements of art. Having experienced the broad range of compositional possibilities contained in the use of light as a primary source of structure, I would rank it as an indispensible one for the graphic artist

In this thesis project I have applied some accepted approaches to the use of light as a means of pictorial expression while continuously incorporating personal style and method. I have shown in the previous sections the various techniques that were adopted and have discovered that technical experimentation can be employed creatively provided that the artist is respectful of the forms which comprise the initial structure of his composition.

In conclusion, research has shown how skillfully the dedicated craftsman can take an element such as light and with respectful manipulation explore the myriad ways it can express that which he feels most deeply.

My thesis is just such an expression of depth. It portrays life with its continuous and beautiful cycles of birth, growth, death, and resurrection. Conscious of the control necessary for a theme of this magnitude, light was determined the basic means of expression to convey that particular dramatic quality contained in the mystery called life.

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