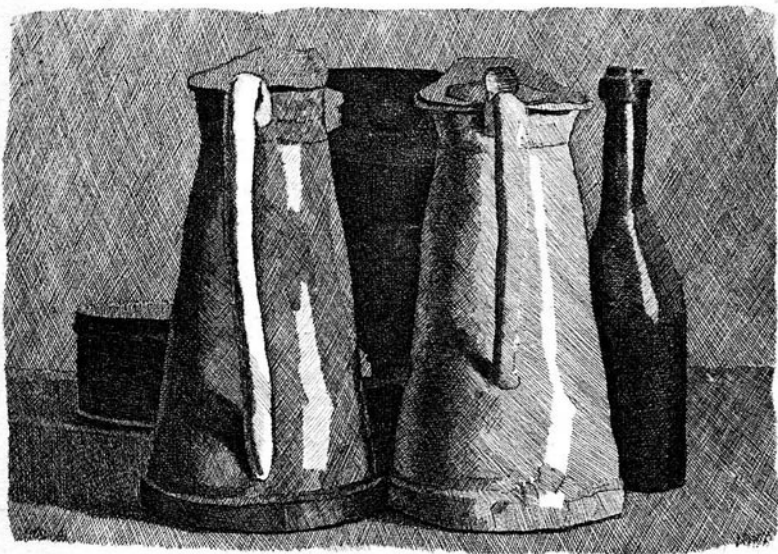


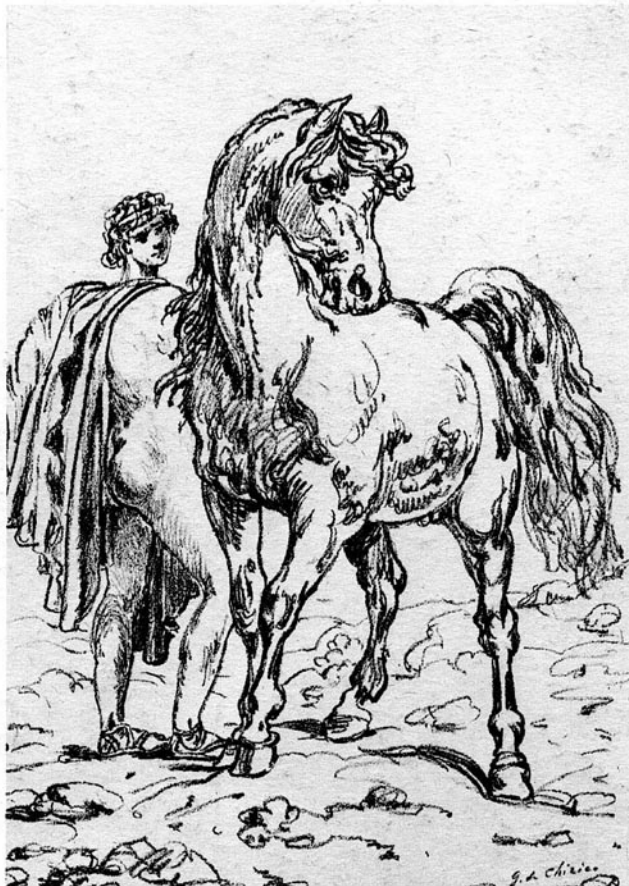
From Pollaiuolo to Paladino
Italian Engraving from the Renaissance to the Present



Haifa Museum, Museum of Art

מפולאיולו לפאלאדינו

התחריט באיטליה מהרנסנס עד ימינו



מוזיאון חיפה החדש, המוזיאון לאמנות

Haila Museum, Museum of Art
Museum Director: Mr. Nissim Tal

From Pollaiuolo to Paladino
Italian Engraving from the Renaissance to the Present

The Exhibition is from the collection of the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, Roma
in collaboration with the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Tel-Aviv

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Exhibition:

Curator: *Daniella Talmor*

Production: *Lilach Berger-Roth, Galia Kaufman, Naomi Merhav, Einat Gertler, Ron Hillel*
Ilya Gornelsky, Rami Zilberstein, Alon Emanuel, Simon Meltzer, Shabtai Benbensht
Tzion Shani, Robert Bauer, Dov Spinner, Kobi Mordechai

Catalogue:

Scientific research & Articles: *Prof. Avraham Ronen, Dr. Stefania Massari, Dr. Federica Di Castro*
Editor: *Daniella Talmor*

Design: *Atara Eitan*

Translation: *Naomi Merhav, Lilian Klajn, Ron Hillel*

Typesetting, Plates & Printing: *Ayalon Offset Ltd.*

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Front cover:

Giorgio de Chirico, 1888 - 1978, Castore, from the series "The Horses", 1948, colour lithograph, 69.4x49.7 cm.

Back cover:

Giorgio Morandi, 1890 - 1964, Still-life with Five Objects, 1956, etching, 14x20 cm. (34.5x50 cm.)

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Introduction

This exhibition has been made possible thanks to the generous help of the National Institute for the Graphic Arts of Rome. This comprehensive show, outlining five hundred years of Italian printmaking, reflects the development of the graphic arts in Italy, and in fact, of the printmaking techniques in the world as a whole.

It is generally accepted that the copper-engraving technique developed in Italy in the fifteenth century as an offshoot of the gold and silversmith's work in Florence. From the seventeenth century, intaglio-printing in Italy became a means of self-expression for craftsmen and not only for printmakers.

At the end of the eighteenth century new techniques were introduced in the art of printmaking, which allowed for more complex prints, resulting in effects similar to painting. This development led to the end of the central position of graphic production in Italy.

From 1995 the Museum of Haifa has emphasized its interest in its graphic collections and their exhibition to the public. Among the exhibitions of graphic works shown from that date it is worth mentioning the following: Georg Baselitz (1997), and "Works on Paper from the Museum's Art Collection" (1996) based on the Museum's international cabinet of graphic art. The Print Collection includes works from the eighteenth century until today, with special emphasis on contemporary trends.

The first director of the Museum, the late Dr. P. Schiff, placed the cornerstone of the International Print Collection, and the late G. Tadmor followed in his steps and went on to enrich the Museum's collection with numerous international graphic works and exhibitions.

It is a great pleasure for me to convey my deepest thanks to the personnel and the direction of the National Institute for the Graphic Arts in Rome, and in particular to Dr. Serenità Papaldo, to Dr. Federica Di Castro and Dr. Stefania Massari, who wrote the articles appearing in the exhibition catalogue; to Prof. Avraham Ronen of Tel-Aviv University, who promoted this exhibition, helped indefatigably to make it a success and also wrote an article for the catalogue; and last but not least, to Dr. Franco Massaia, the departing Cultural Attaché to the Italian Embassy in Israel, and to Dr. Miriam Levi Liuzzi, who replaced him and helped considerably in the promotion of the exhibition and the contacts with Italy.

I also wish to thank the devoted personnel of the Haifa Museum of Art, who worked tirelessly in the preparation of the exhibition and the catalogue.

Nissim Tal

Director General
Haifa Museum

About the Collection

Among the various manifestations of Italian art, engraving is probably the least known, mainly because until recently it was considered more as a means of reproduction than for its own intrinsic value.

The idea of bringing to Israel an exhibition on this subject was born a few years ago during the meeting in Rome of Avraham Ronen, Professor of History of Art in the University of Tel-Aviv, and two officials of the *Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica*, Roma (National Institute for the Graphic Arts), Stefania Massari and Federica Di Castro, who have spent many years studying the various collections and specializing, the former in fifteenth century prints, and the latter in contemporary graphic art, and who, on the basis of their respective expertise, took upon themselves the task of organizing the scientific aspects of the exhibition.

The initiative was successfully carried out in spite of the changes in the direction of the various institutions involved, and the fact that during that period, Stefania Massari was appointed Director of the *Museo delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari di Roma* (Museum of Arts and Popular Traditions of Rome).

Special acknowledgement is due, besides to the people already mentioned and to the present director of Haifa Museum the host Museum, Nissim Tal, to Franco Massaia, until a few months ago Director of the Italian Institute of Culture in Tel-Aviv, and to Miriam Liuzzi, who replaced him, for their efforts to make the show a success.

The exhibition, which is shown to the Israeli public for the first time, comprises the main stages in the history of Italian printmaking, from its origins to the present. Side by side with prints made by the greatest artists, are works by less known engravers, but who, nevertheless, are of exceptional importance, historically, in this particular artistic area.

The works have been selected, not only for their intrinsic qualities, but also to show the changing tastes, from the Renaissance to the Baroque, through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries until our own times, and also the changes or the return to various techniques.

All the prints come from the collection of the *Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica*, which may be considered one of the most important in the world, due to the fact that it comprises, besides engravings, drawings and photographs, the largest patrimony of chalcographic plates, a fact that allows, by comparing similar works, a better knowledge of the techniques used and of the history of graphic arts.

The Institute was founded in 1975 at the initiative of the new *Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali* (Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Property), thus bringing together two existing bodies: the *Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe* (National Cabinet of Prints) and the *Calcografia Nazionale* (National Chalcographic Institute), which, though autonomous organizations, were both founded in the eighteenth century on the basis of works collected by members of the Corsini family, at the moment of the dynasty's highest prestige. The main nucleus of the former institution was in fact the collection of drawings and prints put together by Cardinal Neri Maria Corsini (1685-1770), a passionate collector,

whereas the latter was founded, under the name of *Calcografia Camerale* (State Chalcographic Institute), when Pope Clemente XII Corsini, at the suggestion of his own nephew Neri Maria, acquired in 1738 the rich patrimony of plates from the famous Rossi printing workshop of Rome, thereby preventing its sale to English merchants.

As a result of the donation, in 1883, of the collection of paintings to the State, and of the library to the Accademia dei Lincei by Prince Tommaso Corsini, and of the decision of the Accademia to permanently entrust the State with the collection of drawings and prints, the *Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe* was founded in 1895, whose importance would grow during the following century, not only through the expansion of its collections, but also by the development of all activities connected with the study, conservation and exhibition of the works in its keeping. Thus, the *Calcografia*, having passed from royal hands to the State, notably increased its own patrimony of plates and prints - even if in the past a certain distribution of plates took place - and its editorial activity continued with the direct commissioning of new works. After overcoming periods of crisis due to the advent of photography as a medium of reproduction of images, the *Calcografia* opened its doors to contemporary art, and became a centre of research and experimentation for the engravers themselves, until the present transformation from production workshop into a museum, mainly devoted to the study and conservation of the artistic works, as well as the development of exhibiting and didactic activities.

Even if the most significant nuclei of the collections and of the acquisitions made in the course of the last centuries are absent here, the works shown in this exhibition, notwithstanding the inevitable gaps, reflect the riches of the Institute's print collection.

We hope this show will offer the Israeli public the occasion to appreciate a rather overlooked, and yet no less extraordinary aspect of Italian art, and to get acquainted, through a representative selection of works, with the Institute's print collection.

Dr. Serenità Papaldo

Director, Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, Roma

Italian Graphic Art, its Tradition and Character

Prof. Avraham Ronen

Graphic art is a product of printing techniques, in which the artist does not paint or draw on canvas or paper, but prints the drawing or painting on paper from a woodcut block, an engraved or etched metal plate, or a stone block, which are prepared according to his own designs.

The beginnings of printmaking in Europe may be traced back to the fifteenth century. Until the middle of the sixteenth century graphic artists used two main techniques: woodcut and copper engraving.

Renaissance artists used both techniques to produce prints which appeared like drawings. Lines were used even for the shading, by which the volumetric and plastic structure of the objects and figures were modeled.

The oldest graphic technique was woodcut, which was widely used already in the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Woodcut is a "relief print". After having traced the lines of the drawing on the wood, the artist cuts away the wood around the lines leaving them raised, or "in relief", just as the letters in today's rubber stamps. The wood block was then covered with printing ink and pressed on a sheet of paper by means of a press, so that the cut lines were printed on it.

Cutting beautiful neat lines on a wood block required great expertise, and long hours were spent in its production. But, its advantage lay in the fact that hundreds of copies could be printed from the same block. This technique was particularly suitable for illustrations in printed books.

Copper engraving is an intaglio process, and is thus the exact opposite of wood cut. By means of a steel burin the engraver incises the lines of the drawing directly on the surface of a copper plate. The printing ink is made to penetrate and fill the engraved lines, and the printing press transfers the engraved design to the paper. Engraving lines on a copper plate is of course a much faster process than that of cutting a wood block. The engraving technique makes the creation of the so-called "inner drawing" and of the shading system much easier and enables the creation of much richer linear effects than those produced by woodcuts.

In the beginning of the sixteenth century a new technique, etching, was developed, in which the artist worked on a metal plate (iron or copper) covered with a protecting layer of wax or other similar material. The plate was later immersed in acid, which bit the metal along the incised lines. This technique, which was faster and easier than engraving and allowed for more varied effects, was preferred to engraving by many artists, including the great Rembrandt.

Whereas the origin and beginnings of woodcut in Europe are wrapped in mystery, Italian art historians, among them Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), claimed that copper engraving was invented by Maso Finiguerra (1426-1464), who developed the technique in the early fifteenth century on the basis of his experience as a designer of ornaments and of images of saints, which were engraved on silver plates and ware.

It has, however, been claimed that copper engraving was invented earlier in Germany, and that the graphic arts reached there the highest levels of perfection, when in Italy they were still in their infancy. Those who acknowledged the superiority of the graphic artists of the countries north of the Alps were the Italian graphic artists themselves. This may be proved by the great number of imitations and copies (and even forgeries) of works by well-known artists such as the German Dürer and the Dutch Lucas van Leyden, made in Italy already at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The best known of these imitators was Marcantonio Raimondi, but soon many other joined him.

The particular position of Italian graphic art within the art of the Renaissance may be related to several characteristics of the Italian artistic tradition, which find their expression already in the Early Renaissance. The first significant aspect of this tradition is connected with the particular character of the drawings of the Italian painters, especially those who worked in the most important center of the early Renaissance - Florence. Florentine artists considered drawing as the principal preparatory stage in the creation of the pictorial image. The word "disegno" meant both drawing and design. It indicated the formal structure of the entire composition and of the plastic values of its details. The contour lines as well as the shading were not allowed any independence of expression. The monotonous arrangement of parallel lines in the shading of Leonardo Da Vinci's drawings are thus characteristic of the Florentine drawing tradition.

On the other hand, artists in countries north of the Alps created naturalistic drawings of animals, plants and human beings, which were frequently independent works of art. These drawings, made by pen or by silver point, had a purely linear structure. Even the shading was designed by means of highly developed cross-hatchings, which created complex linear patterns and dynamic compositions.

When it became possible to print these linear drawings by means of woodcut blocks or copper plates, many artists in the Germanic countries, including some of the greatest draughtsmen of the period - Schongauer the "Housebook Master" and Dürer - adopted the art of printing as an integral part of their artistic activity. On the other hand, the Italian Renaissance masters - Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael and their contemporaries, mainly focused their attention on the development of the "pictorial" values of their preparatory drawings, and therefore did not show any real interest in the graphic arts. The graphic arts were thus left to those artists who specialized in them and who usually were not active as painters. Among the very few painters who also made prints were Antonio Pollaiuolo, who left only one engraved work, and Andrea Mantegna. Both of them belong to the Early Renaissance period.

Here, however, we are confronted with an apparently paradoxical phenomenon, which is particularly characteristic of Italian graphic art: since also those artists who specialized in intaglio printing were inspired by the Italian drawing tradition, they too never strove to develop in their prints an active linear system. That is why during the whole of the Renaissance period, and even later, the Italian graphic artists remained dependent upon the creative activity of the painters.

In fact, many of the works of the Italian graphic artists of the Renaissance were either inspired by the paintings of the great masters of the period, or were copied from them. This phenomenon is particularly evident already in the High Renaissance. Marcantonio Raimondi, his assistants and followers, made engraved copies of paintings by Raphael and members of his workshop while artists of the Ghisi and Scultori families and others copied frescoes by Giulio Romano in Mantua. These engravings were in fact

the ancestors of modern reproductions. Although the artistic level of most of these prints did not reach that of the original works, they spread the artistic and aesthetic innovations of the Renaissance not only throughout Italy but also across the whole of Western Europe.

The influence of Italian engravings in the Transalpine Germanic countries began already in the end of the fifteenth century, when several engravings by Andrea Mantegna, inspired by classic Roman reliefs, reached Germany and Switzerland. The engravings aroused great interest amid artists, including the young Albrecht Dürer, and they copied them in their drawings. In that same period several Italian prints belonging to a series of fifty small engravings called "The Tarocchi" (which were wrongly attributed to Andrea Mantegna's workshop) reached Germany. The artistic level of these engravings was fairly modest, but Northern artists considered this series as a true visual Encyclopedia, since it represented the central themes of knowledge of those times: the Olympian planetarian gods, the nine Muses, the Arts, the Virtues, and the Ages of Man.

In spite of the fact that the depiction of the classic subjects appearing in the "Tarocchi" engravings had no direct relation to their depictions in ancient Greek and Roman art, the German artists and illustrators considered them as an authentic visual source of information, and even Dürer copied one of them. The great importance Dürer and his contemporaries attributed to the classic content of the engravings made by the Italian Renaissance artists already at the end of the fifteenth century may be proved by the fact that an Italian engraving (quite mediocre in itself) depicting the Death of Orpheus served as a source of inspiration for one of Dürer's finest early drawings, as well as for one of his prints.

Here we should also mention the influence of woodcut illustrations that appeared in Italian printed books from the early 1470s onward.

Due to the great variety of subjects in the Italian books, which included, among others, classic mythology (specially Ovid's "Metamorphoses"), Greek and Roman history, etc., both text books and their illustrations served as sources of inspiration for artists in the countries north of the Alps. In fact, in Germany, France and the Netherlands there appeared local editions of books originally published in Italy, which included various imitations, or even copies of their original illustrations.

Italian illustrated books of the Renaissance period frequently excelled in the beautiful layout of their pages, and their fine woodcut illustrations. A characteristic example is the fantastic love story "Polyphilus' dream of the battle of love" (*Hypnerotomachia Polyphili*), attributed to Francesco Colonna, which was published in Venice in the famous printing house of Aldus Manutius in 1499. It is universally considered as the most beautiful illustrated book of the Italian Renaissance. The woodcuts depict imaginary landscapes appearing in the dreams of the lover Polyphilus, mysterious ritual sites and views of strange classic ruins. These illustrations later served as sources of inspiration for painters of ideal landscapes during the Baroque period.

During the seventeenth century, the graphic arts in Italy became an independent means of artistic expression. The best known representatives of Italian graphic art of that period were Stefano della Bella, Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione and Salvatore Rosa (who was also an important painter).

In the eighteenth century, well-to-do educated tourists from all parts of Europe, made Italy the principal objective of their "Grand Tour". They visited the great artistic centers and were also particularly

interested in Italy's classical ruins and archaeological sites. This kind of enlightened tourism encouraged the creation of paintings depicting Italian urban and archaeological sites, as well as the production of series of prints (mostly etchings) showing these subjects. The most important master of topographical etchings was Giovanni Battista Piranesi, who was also one of the greatest creators of original prints.

From the end of the eighteenth century onward new graphic techniques have been developed one after the other, which made it possible for artists to imitate in their prints effects characteristic of painting. As a result of these developments, Italian graphic art has lost much of its particular traditional character. Among the few artists who remained faithful to the traditional etching technique and style was Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964), in whose printed oeuvre, the great Italian tradition of "disegno" is perfectly blended with the particular idiom of linear etching.

Modern Italian Engraving

Dr. Federica Di Castro

It is not possible to deal with the subject of modern Italian printmaking, the result of an individual research, without going back to the eighteenth century, the time when the art flourished, when outstanding artists devoted themselves to developing engraving techniques in which they found their own and most personal language of expression. It is enough to consider the three Tiepolo (Gian Battista, Domenico and Lorenzo), Canaletto, and Piranesi. Whether they devoted themselves to a realistic or grotesque treatment of the human figure, or to depict romantic landscapes, each of these artists perfected a particular mark of their own and a particular conception of space, a characteristic which will constitute a strong union link with the most original engraving research done in the following centuries.

Simultaneously to the activity of the above mentioned artists, a whole body of work develops: prints which are simply reproductions of monuments and churches, meant to satisfy the needs of a wide public made up of curious, though not necessarily artistically wise, travellers. It is at that time that the original print, just as the reproduction print, enters the scene now in its own right in order to satisfy an ever-growing public. Interest in prints, which went hand-in-hand with an increasing level of culture, reached the peak of its expansion at the end of the eighteenth century, and the consequent interest in collecting caused the international market to thrive, thus marking the period with a bountiful trace of its heritage.

It is precisely its function as reminder of the classical sites, which developed together with a general taste for antiquity and its icons, the trait that characterizes the vast production of prints of the nineteenth century, when prints decidedly assumed the task - which will be replaced by photography a few decades later - of documenting the Italian artistic patrimony.

Modern intaglio-printmaking was born around the middle of the nineteenth century, and it stood somehow in contrast - contrary to what had happened during the previous century, in which the boundaries between creative work and reproduction were not theoretically well-defined - with the communicative function that printmaking was to assume. It was at that moment in history that some artists adopted the engraving technique as their own personal expressive mark, endowed with great possibilities of inner development.

This is precisely the century which endorses the reproductive power of printmaking, in its mechanization - working on the identity and on the recollection of the object, expressing systematic documentation as its own need, an indispensable premise to knowledge, and reproducing with effects of light and volume Italian altarpieces, frescoes, marble groups and monuments - promoting in some artists the use of the engraving technique as a method of investigation of the subtle psychological connection that unites the artist to the object represented. A linguistic dichotomy thus comes about: whereas the reproduction print uses mainly the burin engraving technique, original engraving printmaking finds its own expression in etching, drypoint and lithography, all these techniques being more mobile, more sensitive to subtle changes of expressive intensity.

The nineteenth century in Italy cultivated an art of modest ambitions and innovations; it numbers few artists of European importance: after these, nevertheless, some personalities appeared who have perhaps given the best of themselves in the field of engraving. One worth mentioning is Giovanni Fattori, a representative in painting of the movement of Tuscan Impressionists (Macchiaioli), who is undoubtedly the most vital exponent of an engraving research carried out in solitude: he left a hundred and eighty etched plates, of which only few were printed, since he made them for his own private use, were neither shown in public exhibitions nor were they ever meant to be put up for sale. In these prints the artist's outlook reflects his natural environment, and this nature that surrounds him is wild and harsh, that of the Maremma, the marsh, where the dense vegetation, growing spontaneously, is hard to tame by both man and animals. The confrontation with nature suggests to Fattori the expressive quality of a rude and strong trace that articulates itself in fragments separated by pauses, in which the contrast between light and shade becomes violent and sometimes dazzling. Fattori engraved as he wandered around, in order to transfer onto the plate the directness of the impressions he obtained from the countryside. An heir of Canaletto's as far as his trace is concerned, Fattori exercised a direct influence on the twentieth century artist Bartolini, in the way of perceiving nature and of expressing exalted feelings.

Another prominent representative of the century is Antonio Fontanesi, active in Turinese circles, who, differently from Fattori, devoted himself to engraving, etching and lithograph printing in order to make a living, but who managed to endow his own craftsmanship as an engraver with the essence of pantheistic poetics, exalting a nature which includes man in its essential truth. Fontanesi knew how to employ his technical ability, which he possessed in the highest degree, to restore to the engraving language all its inventiveness and creative aura, making use of *chiaroscuro* in images done against a crumbling, dazzling light. Fontanesi's procedures reveal the love the Italian master felt for Turner's watercolours and his desire to achieve in print results similar to those obtained by the English painter.

Giuseppe De Nittis, of Apulia, spent the last part of his life in France. He managed to reflect in etchings and drypoint prints the vivacity of the spontaneous printmaking and was attracted by subjects dear to Impressionist painters, and above all Manet, examining their approach to the object in their portraits and the places they chose to depict, trying their hand at mundane meeting-places, from stations to coffee-houses. His trace is light and sensual, well-measured and dosed to let light filter through and to turn it into the main protagonist of each visual element, often blending it with smoke and fog and finally with the impalpability of atmospheric dust.

Much richer in stimuli and contradictions than during the nineteenth century, Italy, in the twentieth century, becomes the stage of lively avant-gardes where the artists are often busy finding out their own innovative abilities. Umberto Boccioni produced his plates in the prefuturistic period and therefore they only reveal their potential within an artistic conception which may be still considered as belonging to the previous century, whereas Felice Casorati, using an intricately stylized trace, reminds us in his engravings of Klimt and the Viennese school. Gino Severini is probably the only one to reflect in printmaking - etchings and above all lithographs - the futuristic ambiance in which his art matures; on the contrary, Alberto Magnelli fully affirms through engraving the quality of an abstract-geometric poetic expression of Kandinskyan origin, which confirms the reality of the slogan "to new spaces - new forms".

The first compact personality, without departing from a personal expressive mission, is represented, in the field of engraving, by Giorgio Morandi. Contrary to what is often stated, Morandi was not an isolated phenomenon: in spite of the fact that he did not adhere to Futurism, he exhibited together with Futuristic artists, whereas he was strongly influenced by the metaphysical painting of Carrà and de Chirico: when referring to Morandi's engraving production it can be said without hesitation that it is all born in a metaphysical climate, out of a metaphysics ingrained in their author. Engraving develops from the beginning of Morandi's career parallelly to his painting, and somehow underlines the stages. Landscapes and still-lives, done with the quiet insistence of the crisscross treatment, represent most often familiar, daily objects, but well-researched and perceived in the various relations of light and shade, in the various rhythms of time and hour. A certain monotony, a melancholy feeling, mysteriously hard to grasp, pervade his work, and is expressed in an etching technique which, due to the repeated use of crisscrossed lines, reminds the viewer of the scanned rhythm of burin engraving.

Luigi Bartolini, another great engraver who was also a writer, was well-versed in the work of Rembrandt and Castiglione. A friend of Morandi's, but artistically removed from him by temperament, Bartolini adopted a vigorous and sensitive trace, connected to naturalistic visions and to portraits of people in the fields, taking Fattori's engraving experience to its maximum expression. The clear, fragmented trace, reminding us of Fattori's handiwork, other than merely defining the object, acts freely on the plate, endowing the light with unforeseen elements which were allowed to flow from the unconscious, supporting the spontaneous course of a very personal and uncontrollable craftsmanship. Bartolini, contrary to Morandi, who worked from memory and from subjects who posed for him, engraves his plates in the open, immersed in nature as in a global inexhaustible source of inspiration.

Carlo Carrà began to etch in 1922, at a time when his metaphysical period may be considered as concluded and he is taking a more realistic approach in his paintings. Since he made thirty-two prints in that year and also in the following, it can be said that etching marks the passage and underscores it. In his etchings, Carrà repeats the themes of many of his metaphysical paintings which, due to the linguistic transposition, are reconfirmed in their iconographic essence. At the same time some seascapes and portraits mark the point of conjunction between metaphysics and realism. In his etchings, Carrà's trace is elementary, one could even say primitive, so exemplary is it in its rigid purity; in his lithographs, on the contrary, it is tender and pictorial, even when he returns to motifs already tried in his futurist or metaphysical paintings, to make them live in a synchronous time, in the eternal present of the engraving medium.

Giorgio de Chirico tried his hand at etching and lithography, and in both techniques he went deep into the mixed themes of Romanticism and of passionate Neoclassicism he favoured, never abandoning a surreal atmosphere. If the themes are common both to his paintings and his engravings, the latter are the narrative development of the themes in several folios, which permit the observer to penetrate a mysterious world in all its compactness and intermingling of heterogeneous elements put together by the artist's creative genius. De Chirico was a great draughtsman, and this is reflected in his graphic art; at the same time his love for poetic texts made him the plastic interpreter of authors such as Cocteau and Apollinaire, enlarging where possible, through his own images, the original inspirational motif.

Renzo Vespi gnani, engraver and painter, began etching during the 40s, developing harsh painful subject matter, such as that of the war disasters. But simultaneously his interest was captured by the Roman suburbs, with their idle construction yards during festive days of rest, places instilling an almost metaphysical bewilderment, which he will repeat in his graphic work all along his life. Depicted with a subtle and intricate trace, phantoms of buildings in construction rise, destined to a still absent population; modern "ruins", due to the desolation they embody, these unfinished buildings remind the viewer of Piranesi's ruins, reflecting the passage of time and the affective abandonment of the people. Vespi gnani is maybe the only "visionary" among those devoted to graphic art in the twentieth century, and in his engravings one can read, as against the light, given the slenderness of his trace and its threadlike mesh, a continuous dialogue between the history of man and death. Vespi gnani, similarly to de Chirico, felt the call to interpret poetical verses, putting in plastic images the texts of great Italian romantic poets such as Leopardi.

The second half of the century is marked by the introduction of abstract art, based on a new analysis of perception and the invention of new formal styles. The graphic medium once again becomes the testing ground of such experimentations, often with great success. Capogrossi considered engraving as the possibility of utmost corroboration of his own formal module, in expressive reduced dimensions, which he will reproduce in drypoint, thus conferring depth, or else in aquatint with an excellent pictorial effect. Among the artists who will employ engraving as a medium to define their own identity we must mention above all Piero Dorazio. Using drypoint and burin techniques, Dorazio starts working in black and white on small copper plates which gave evidence of the clear trace as much as of rigorous composition. Later he started using colour, making aquatint prints obtained from several plates, which offered as a result a work of rich chromatic faceting; then he began making larger works, until he managed to obtain very large prints whose effect on the wall rivalled that of paintings, yet maintaining the linguistic purity which identifies all his expressive research.

The work of Giulia Napoleone belongs in the same area as Dorazio's, concentrated on the element which bears the structure and on the most relevant language to the structure to be depicted. Since such a procedure has its roots in vision, the direct techniques in which Napoleone excels - punching and black ink- restore to prints a certain velvety effect, both dense and sensual, which is the true protagonist of engraving. Emilio Vedova is basically connected, as a painter, to the informal trend, and his graphic work, made in the etching and lithographic techniques, fully reflect that free world of expressive impulses that branch out in an organized manner by the vibration of a spontaneous energy. Vedova's engraving production is always in black and white, and his blacks, full of aggressive vitality, perform the main role. All of Vedova's work is socially and politically engaged, which makes his subject matter both vibrant and intensely communicative. His engraving production is mainly understood in this key, as a strong language of expression, capable of multiple communicative ramifications. It is understood, moreover, as the expression of the multiplicity of a series, adopting the poetics of reproducibility in order to represent its essence. Afro stands out as a peculiar case, an artist of informal mould who relies essentially on chromatic values to express himself, with minimal rejection of luminous effects, which transfers in engraving the essential mark of his trace, obtained through the absolute rigour of meagre figures in black and white, using etching and drypoint.

Achille Perilli, together with Gastone Novelli, represent an area of abstract research working on the recollection of remote shapes in which a vaguely surreal element is ever present. Shape and figure become one in Perilli's prints, in which the narrative intent is sometimes pressing and leads him to actually produce true "artist's books", whereas in Novelli's prints, the engraving trace has the same mould as writing and this helps him design composite images. Some abstract sculptors, such as Pietro Consagra or Lorenzo Guerini, transferred the figures/images of sculpture to the engraving plate, i.e., onto a single plane, thus allowing for a mental and constitutive reading of the original; at the same time the abstract trend continued, with new intentions, also into the production of the younger generations, as evidenced in the work of Luce Delhove, all played on the multiple experience of the engraving trace and on the light retained by the tight composition.

But one of the liveliest expressive contexts of the 70s is that constituted by conceptual research, represented in the work of Paolini, Patella and Pistoletto, who, using various technical media, recuperated those engravings from the historic past that could be related in several interpretative iconographic keys. The results of such researches are imbued with a rare formal elegance and the idea of engraving as a mirror, a confrontation between the present and the past, with a passionate and also ironical feeling of history and its intrinsic process. If the 80s allow for the maturing of the research contexts here stated, they also let transpire a new interest for the observation of reality and for the reintegration of the human figure in the pictorial context, while engraving reflects the latter as evidenced in large prints.

Sandro Chia etches monumental images, to which he confers a dimension of sentimental lightness. His crisscrossed tracing reminds us, due to the steadiness of the course, of Morandi's, while the figures send us back to the best exponent of the tradition of the twentieth century, Mario Sironi. Chia, who studied engraving at the Academy of Fine Arts of Florence, never neglected this medium of expression, so much so that his engraving production by now is made up of several hundred prints; during the 70s he worked at the *Calcografia di Roma* where he made "Oroborus" a print destined to be included in "Bibliography," a collection of his artistic production, and afterwards he produced numerous lithographs in black and white which reflect a trace of sprightly vitality and display light, almost aerial, figures, evoking those of Chagall.

Such a sense of lightness is also the source of inspiration for Isabella Ducrot, whose monotypes with erotic themes play upon the smoothness of the graphic material and upon the renewed esteem for reduced formats, in a chromatic scale going from black through all grays. For Mimmo Paladino, engraving and sculpting have become the principal fields of artistic expression. He employs several engraving media: xylography, etching and drypoint, aquatint, monotype. In his engraved works, as in his sculptures, Paladino searches for a world buried under long centuries of civilization, a pristine, archaic world, which surfaces and becomes matter. His figures embody a remote authenticity of being and at the same time the subtle refinement deriving from the expressive means of the contemporary world and of modern thinking which encompasses history, with the capacity to relive it in an expanded present. Bruno Ceccobelli makes use of the pictorial density to explore a magmatic, spectral universe in which the plate, the blacks and browns, together with the value of light embodied in them all, contribute to create an aura of unfathomable mystery.

In her drypoint works on copper, Giancarla Frare seems to be referring to those very worlds, which ideally dig out in stone to draw out emblematic figures from a past whose faces are disquieting to this very day. The unconscious emerges from those images with a vitality capable of creating a dense patrimony of images all immersed in this vast contemporaneity which condenses the research for a true expression of reality in our present day and hour.



▲
ג'יאנקרלה מרארה, ג, 1950, 1907, סאבן, 1994,
תחרוץ יבש, 49.2x48.6 ס"מ (19.2x70 ס"מ)
*Giancarlo Frare, b, 1950, Stone Figure, 1994,
drypoint, 49.2x48.6 cm. (19.2x70 cm.)*



►
ג'יאנקרלה מרארה, ג, 1950, 1907, סאבן, 1994,
תחרוץ יבש, 62.2x45 ס"מ (19.2x70.6 ס"מ)
*Giancarlo Frare, b, 1950, Stone Figure, 1994,
drypoint, 62.2x45 cm. (19.2x70.6 cm.)*



גיאנקרלה פראטה, 1950, דמות מאבן, 1993, תחריט יבש, 49.7x48.6 ס"מ (99.2x70 ס"מ)
Giancarlo Frate, 1950, Stone figure, 1993, drypoint, 49.7x48.6 cm, (99.2x70 cm)