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*The Art of the Print: Masterpieces, History, Techniques* by  
Fritz Eichenberg, and: *Fine Prints: Collecting, Buying and  
Selling* by Cecile Shapiro and Lauris Mason (review)

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Much of the interest in the book centers quite naturally on the emotional impact of solely graphic articulation. Aside from a few examples of ink washes, the drawings are divided mainly between pencil and ink—each of which tends to yield markedly different styles: the former a romantic tonal sensuousness and the latter a more intellectual linear cleverness in which marks and configurations are manipulated for their own curiosity.

Various geographic locations have influenced his work: Scotland, Italy, China and New York are represented either as visual journalism, nostalgic fantasy or utilized at various levels of Surrealism.

Many artists appear to have influenced his multitudinous techniques. As in Escher's work, there is an emphasis on impossible figures and optical illusions. Like Picasso and other cubists he is interested in distorted figures and the fusion of multiple vantage points. His analytical graphic linear structures are often similar to those of Paul Klee. Like Dali, he can be self consciously and intimately surrealistic—utilizing what one might call a vaguely decadent classical tonal sensualism. There is a hint of Redon in certain haunted, enigmatic tonal portraits. Yet, as in Steinberg's cartoons, I also note decorative elaborations of subject matter and design motifs that have a distinctly commercial illustrative flavor. Whether one sees all this as an overly-mutable eclecticism or a sophisticated and urbane largesse that admits of no prior claims on stylistic possibilities depends on the qualities of individual uniqueness one is able to detect at the core of these manifestations. McLaren has a fine talent for innovation and sensitive effects in these drawings. Many of his interests appear to have been abandoned after the first raw fruits of their potential were glimpsed, and some of them may suffer somewhat by comparison with other artists who developed similar themes more thoroughly. However, these apparently derivative modes are only a limited percentage of his total activity and they *do* offer something new and interesting in each case. Certain of his extra-dimensional studies might well point to new artistic and even scientific insights.

There may indeed be too many styles here for one person to thoroughly realize and develop in one lifetime, but McLaren's 'play' is dazzling in its scope, if not comfortably consistent in its depth and single-mindedness. It would be most interesting to see a subsequent book on his 'work': a comprehensive text on his films.

**The Art of the Print: Masterpieces, History, Techniques.** Fritz Eichenberg. Abrams, New York, 1976. 611 pp., illus. **Fine Prints: Collecting, Buying and Selling.** Cecile Shapiro and Lauris Mason. Harper & Row, New York and London, 1976. 256 pp., illus. \$10.95. Reviewed by **Seán O'Driscoll\***

The prestige of the print is now very high. The number of printmakers and print exhibitions is steadily increasing, and painters and sculptors are beginning to realize the artistic as well as the economic potentials of printmaking. Art teachers need at least a background knowledge of the history, techniques and ways of acquiring of original prints. These two books are a complementary pair of the liveliest and most up-to-date texts available in their related specialties. Eichenberg's book is undoubtedly the most comprehensive single volume yet published on the history and techniques of printmaking. Shapiro and Mason present a thorough guide for collectors, buyers and sellers in a far more practical approach than those published before.

The first book gives an excellent coverage of the development of the graphic arts from its early beginnings to the latest innovative techniques, including 3-dimensional approaches. The techniques described are illustrated with well-selected examples (749 illustrations, including 95 plates in color), most of which have not been reproduced before in a textbook. The author, Director Emeritus of the Pratt Graphic Arts Center, New York, describes each of the techniques expertly and thoroughly. His words are supported by such masters of printmaking as Dürer, Rembrandt, Goya, Hogarth, Audubon, Piranesi, Cassat, Degas,

Picasso, Matisse and Miro, as well as comments by contemporary artists including Avati, Masereel, Peterdi and Wengenroth. The step-by-step procedure for making works by Summers and Deshaies, prepared specifically for this book, is also illustrated. Thus the various techniques are researched, analyzed and explained. A supplementary section covers the leading graphic workshops, past and present, with illustrations of prints produced in them. There is also a section on papermaking, including the history as well as the care and preservation of paper prints.

The only weak part in Eichenberg's history of intaglio print methods is his coverage of the soft-ground technique. The book might have gained by the inclusion of a brief note covering the historical development from the 18th century *imitation du crayon* of François, through the classic soft-ground approach to Félicien Rops' perfection of the technique a century ago. It is important to note that until Rops' successful experiments it was not practical to retouch the plate after the first bite. The only print reproduced (by Roseann Drew) is more like a typical aquatint, with none of the pencil-line characteristics of the true soft-ground plate. At least one illustration of the classic soft-ground technique would have clarified this section: perhaps an example of Rops' perfection of the technique, like 'La Feuille de Vigne', might have benefited the book.

It might also have been appropriate for Eichenberg to have provided some details on the elusive Saudé printmaking technique. Saudé's stencil prints, in many respects a more personal art than serigraphy, were obscured in history by the later more mechanical silk-screen technique, which is easy to identify. Knowledge of the characteristics of the Saudé print is especially important, as this less understood technique continues to confuse even connoisseurs. Jean Saudé, himself, is probably most to blame for the lack of dissemination of details of his technique; until he approached retirement in 1925, he guarded his workshop secrets. When he finally published his *Traité d'Enluminure d'Art au Pochoir*, it had a very limited distribution, as practically every page contained some kind of hand printing; even the endpapers and binding were printed manually *à la Saudé*.

Perhaps only an Irish printmaker would be concerned about the Irish School's not being mentioned in the mezzotint section. The English listing includes the misspelled name of J. MacCardell; this was undoubtedly meant to be James McArdell, a Dublin-born youth who at the age of 25 carried the art to a height it had not previously attained and was the founder of the great school of mezzotint engravers of the 18th century. Another mezzotint pioneer (listed by name but not identified) is Luttrell, born in Dublin in 1650; his novel process of surfacing his plates by rolling with a roughened roller might have proven of interest to contemporary printmakers.

In the second book, Shapiro and Mason introduce collectors to the little-publicized methods of the experts in finding, buying, judging, preserving and restoring original prints. The bibliography gives excellent coverage to relatively unlisted works of reference used by experts in print identification and documentation. In addition, an unusually complete glossary of print terms is included, with the French and German equivalents. This text is a useful tool for those seriously concerned with the many problems related to the acquisition of fine prints. It is in a concise digestible form, based upon the premise that the reader already has a technical background as would be provided by such a comprehensive text as Eichenberg's. Although Shapiro and Mason place emphasis on the contemporary prints in the U.S.A., the most important foreign print resources are adequately described.

Both books tend to downgrade the importance of European *chalcographie* centers (in fact, neither book mentions the important Brussels collection of original plates). Despite opinions to the contrary, posthumous prints from original plates are not necessarily 'worn or weak impressions'. Being produced by master printers, they have been known to outshine the sometimes weak and more uneven impressions pulled earlier in an artist's atelier. Art teachers are urged to exploit this valuable resource.

No book can be truly definitive in this unusually productive period of printmaking; nevertheless, I highly recommend both of these books to artists and teachers.

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