



Leon Gilmour

Wood Engraving

Let the Living Rise, 1937

Courtesy of M. Lee Stone Fine Prints, Inc., CA

## California in Relief:

### A History of Wood and Linocut Prints

July 25 through September 20, 2009

at Hearst Art Gallery,

Saint Mary's College, Moraga, CA

*California in Relief: A History in Wood and Linocut Prints*, opening July 25, 2009 at the Hearst Art Gallery of Saint Mary's College, explores the development of the relief print in Northern California that carries with it the story of the Golden State. The exhibition is on view through September 20, 2009.

Nearly 100 works on paper spanning more than 100 years of California art history represent the culmination of years of research by guest curator and noted print artist Art Hazelwood. The woodcuts, linocuts and wood engravings on view formed the basis of several distinctive art movements and cultural and political movements as well. Women formed a powerful and early voice in this media, as did the Labor movement and Latino artists.

Among the more than 75 artists represented are Victor Arnautoff, Gustave Baumann, Lucienne Bloch, Linda Lee Boyd, Richard V. Correll, Antonio Fransconi,

Leon Gilmour, George Matsusaburo Hibi, Helen Hyde, Tom Killion, Bertha Lum, Emmanuel C. Montoya, Chiura Obata, Elizabeth Norton, Emmy Lou Packard, Mildred Rackley, Roy Ragle, William S. Rice, Frank Rowe, Charles Surendorf, Wayne Thiebaud, and William Wolff.

This exhibition explores the history of the relief print in Northern California. Within this narrow range is a powerful story of artistic techniques meeting in this mid-point between the three great regions of relief printing—Japan, Mexico and Europe. But the story of the relief print's development doesn't stop with these influences, but has continued, acquiring new influences along the way.

The impact of Japanese color woodcut takes two forms. The indirect influence affected artists such as William S. Rice who took what he saw in Japanese prints and created works that

are Western in conception but Japanese in inspiration. The direct influence can be found in Helen Hyde and Bertha Lum, two of the most prominent of the many artists who went to Japan and adopted not only the technique, but also the aesthetic of the Japanese print.

When Diego Rivera completed his first mural in San Francisco in 1930, he became the catalyst of a new direction in Northern California art. Many of the artists that were influenced by Rivera and the leftist politics of the time went on to focus on woodcut prints. A central meeting point for many of these artists was the **California Labor School** (1942 - 1957) in San Francisco. The **Labor School** eventually was shut down during the McCarthy era, and the **Graphic Arts Workshop** emerged from its ashes. Both incarnations served as a home for many artists, including Emmy Lou Packard, Richard V. Correll

and William Wolff, who continued the expressive tradition begun in the 1930s.

Wood engraving was primarily a technique for illustration and reproduction in the 19th century. The technical virtuosity of American wood engravers began to rival the British, but by 1915 wood engraving was being replaced by photographic processes. The distinctive quality of wood engraving, which produces such fine line work and tonal variation, is clearly discernible as a style in itself. In the 1930s, artists such as Leon Gilmour began to reinvent wood engraving as a medium whose purpose was more expressive than illustrative.

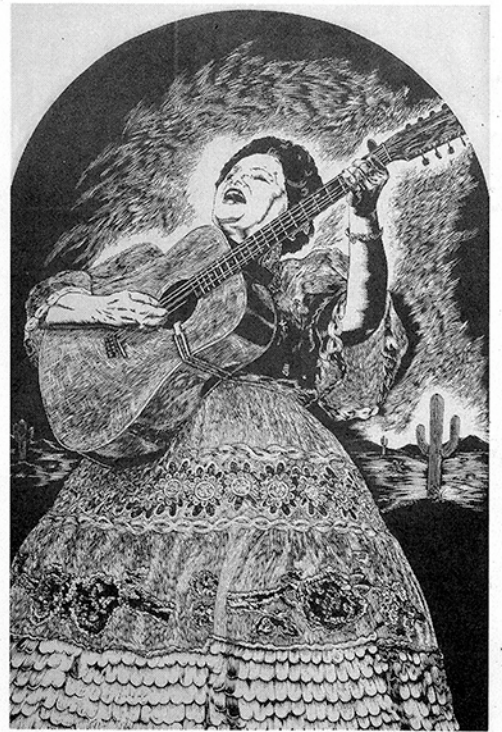
Before World War II relief prints could be seen broadly to fall into the three categories of Japanese influence, Labor School and wood engraving. While all continued after the war, there were new forces at work. The growth of the university art department, the rise of abstraction, the development of the print publishing houses and, most recently, the Latino art movement, all had a significant effect on relief printmaking.

The GI Bill sent huge numbers of students to university and greatly expanded the university system. It would be hard to argue that a singular style emerged out of the university system, but the range of teachers brought in from around the country added a new breadth of approaches. Janet Turner, Sylvia Walters and Kathryn Metz all came from out of state to run printmaking departments.

Abstraction had a profound influence on Northern California artists, although the number of artists producing abstract relief prints has been fairly limited. The medium, with its hard edges of delineation, could have something to do with this. Such artists tend to ride the line between figurative and abstract, whether Inez Johnston's whimsical figures or Sandy Walker's landscape inspired abstractions.

The birth of the print publishing houses started in the 1960s. **Crown Point Press** and others began inviting well known artists who often had no experience in making prints to create a work with master printers. Usually the presses focused on etching, but occasionally woodcuts were produced by artists including William Wiley and Robert Arneson.

Despite the history of relief printing in Mexico, the Chicano art movement of the 1970s was dominated by the screen print. Emmanuel C. Montoya was among the first of the artists associated with this movement to fully embrace relief prints. He began in the early 1980s by reaching back to the graphic quality of some pre-Hispanic clay stamps, then making contact with printmakers associated with the **Taller de Grafica Popular** in Mexico. In recent years more artists, several of whom immigrated from Mexico, have pursued



Emanuel C. Montoya

Linocut

Homenaje a Lydia Mendoza: La Reina Tejana, 1991

Courtesy of the Artist

relief prints. These printmakers have a distinctive style and subject matter that clearly suggests a shared vision. Their work also shares elements with the **Labor School**, in their social criticism and expressive power. They are perhaps the newest manifestation of the profound influence of Latino art on Northern California, a new flowering appearing years after Diego Rivera's first visit.

Art Hazelwood has a particular interest in promoting the work of artists who have been overlooked, or whose work has disappeared from view. He is the curator of a number of print artists' retrospectives as well as a touring exhibition **Hobos to Street People, Artists' Responses to Homelessness** from the New Deal to the Present. His prints are in the **Whitney Museum of American Art** and the **Library of Congress**.

Opening weekend events include a panel discussion on

Sunday, July 26, at 2pm, featuring Daniel Lienau of the **Annex Galleries**, Emmanuel C. Montoya, artist, Lee Stone, **M. Lee Stone Fine Prints**, Sylvia Solochek Walters, Professor Emerita, **San Francisco State University**, and moderator, Art Hazelwood, exhibition curator.

The discussion will be held in Claeys Lounge, across the road from the **Hearst**.

Admission is free; donations accepted.

The **Hearst Art Gallery** is accredited by the American Association of Museums.

**Saint Mary's College of California, Hearst Art Gallery** is located at 1928 Saint Mary's Road, Moraga, CA. Gallery hours: Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission: \$3 adults; free to members of the **Hearst Art Gallery**; free parking. Telephone: (925) 631-4379. Web site: [www.hearstart-gallery.org](http://www.hearstart-gallery.org).

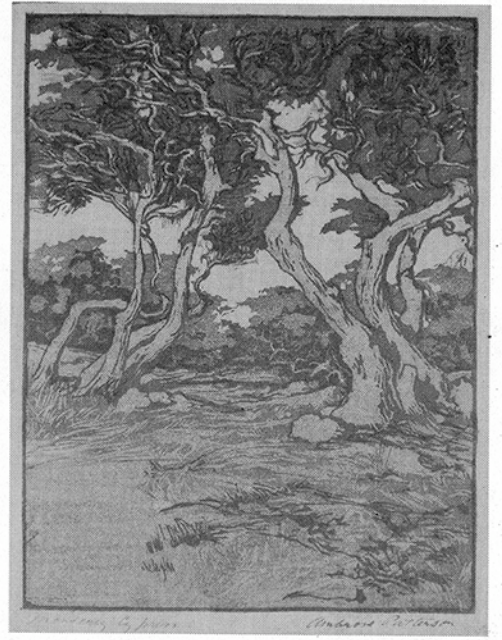


Anthony Ryan

Color Reduction Woodcut

Unfinished Building: Mission District, 2005

Courtesy of the Artist



Ambrose Patterson

Color Woodcut

Monterey Cypress-C, 1917

Courtesy of Annex Galleries, CA