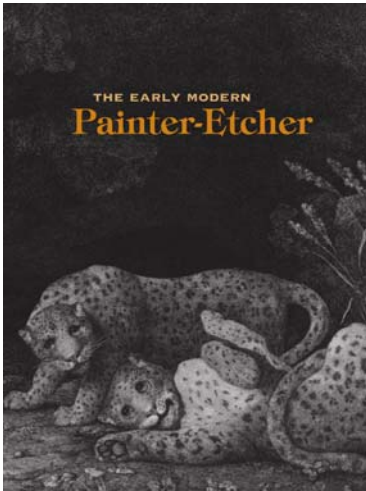




The Early Modern Painter-Etcher / Edited by Michael Cole—University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006.—189p.:ill— ISBN 0-271-02905-6 (cl., alk. paper): \$50.00.



This book accompanies an exhibition that opened in April, 2006, at the University of Pennsylvania. The exhibition, organized by Michael Cole, associate professor of the history of art at the University of Pennsylvania, and Madeleine Viljoen, director and curator, LaSalle University Art Museum, focuses on the intricacies of printmaking and its transition from a medium for specially trained professionals to a medium for painters and draftsmen. The roughly seventy artists included in the exhibition worked between 1500-1800; they were primarily engaged in painting, but were also creating etchings. Master printmakers such as Giovanni Battista Piranesi and Jacques Callot are excluded because this exhibit is devoted to experimentation by the non-specialist.

The catalog includes essays by the exhibition's curators and by art historians Larry Silver, Susan Dackerman, and Graham Larkin. For the most part, the contributors examine and assess the ways in which an artist's typical painting or drawing style is changed by the act of printmaking. Although some discuss the technical aspects of creating a print, the authors have taken pains to define and explain terms for general readers and to include helpful illustrations that complement their descriptions.

The notion of experimentation and play is expressed throughout. In "Etching and Drawing in Early Modern Europe," Viljoen cites differences between artists who draw on the plate and those who create prints based on sketches, or previous works. Some contributors note that etching tended to frustrate and excite artists in equal turns, because although it may have been easy for an artist to get the image on the plate, the acid could and would do unexpected things that rendered their work and planning useless. For example, Susan Dackerman discusses Albrecht Dürer, who worked as a printmaker his whole life, yet found etching frustrating and only produced six etchings in his lifetime.

The notes associated with each catalog image are detailed and enlightening and place the work in relation to other works. The many black-and-white illustrations are of good quality and etchers will particularly enjoy the illustrations that show the same plate in different states.

This title is best suited for advanced undergraduate and graduate students. Art historians will find the essays more accessible than artists, but the illustrations and discussion of each catalog image will be very useful for printmakers.

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