PRINTS BY SCULPTORS

A selection from the Otte-Cavalcanti collection

Prints by sculptors

In 1998 Melchior Otte and Yara Cavalcanti Araujo purchase an etching by Spanish artist Eduardo Chillida. It is the first of many acquisitions of prints by sculptors. Over a period of 27 years, the collectors have assembled a multifaceted collection that has a notable self-imposed limitation: graphic work exclusively by sculptors. They devote their free time almost entirely to visiting studios, galleries, art dealers and museums in search of additions to their collection.

Strength in the limitation

Despite, or perhaps precisely because of collecting exclusively graphic work by sculptors, the Otte-Cavalcanti collection is very rich. For instance, it spans more than a century: the oldest work dates from 1913, the most recent from 2023. In addition to the work of classical sculptors such as Ossip Zadkine, Lynn Chadwick, Henry Moore and Auke de Vries, it also includes prints by more experimental artists such as Jessica Stockholder and Krijn de Koning. There is also a multitude and variety of techniques used: from etchings, lithographs and screen prints, to artists' books, special editions and the occasional sculpture. In each case, it revolves around the question of how sculptors visualise their spatial thinking about form, proportion, space, location and emptiness on the flat surface.

Parallel collections

The Otte-Cavalcanti collection has a wonderful parallel in the collection of drawings by sculptors at the Kröller-Müller Museum. Both former director Bram Hammacher and his successor Rudi Oxenaar regarded these works on paper as an autonomous genre, an independent discipline in which the artist gives form to his or her ideas. The same is true for the sheets of prints and artists' books by sculptors collected by Melchior Otte and Yara Cavalcanti Araujo. The Kröller-Müller Museum owns sculptures by many of the artists in their collection, such as *Man and Woman* (1963) by Eugène Dodeigne in the sculpture garden, *Horse and Rider* (1951–1955) by Marino Marini in the sculpture gallery and *K-Piece* (1972) by Mark Di Suvero which stands at the entrance to the museum.

Within the bountiful world of printmaking, five techniques can be broadly distinguished, each of which falls roughly into two groups: intaglio, relief and planographic printing involve transferring ink to the substrate under high pressure (printing press); porous printing and the relatively new digital printing technique often do not require this.

Edition

For all these printing techniques, multiple prints can be made of a single image. Each print is usually provided with an edition number. For example, edition number 2/20 means that it is the second print of an edition of twenty prints. By signing the prints, the artist confirms their authenticity and protects the edition for later reprinting. Sometimes the artist signs a reserved number of prints with the abbreviation EA (épreuve d'artiste) or AP (artist proof). These artist proofs are usually identical to the regular edition, but are often considered more valuable due to their limited quantity.

Printing techniques

In relief printing, such as Joel Shapiro's woodcut *Untitled* (2003), the printing ink lies on raised sections of the printing form. The recesses are cut out of the printing form with a sharp object – in this example with a gouge – thus creating the image. By contrast, intaglio printing involves rubbing ink into recessed areas of a printing plate. This is quite apparent in *Cracked Earth* (1979) by Menashe Kadishman. His etching plate and the inked areas create a clearly discernible relief in the paper.

Planographic printing, such as lithography, makes use of the immiscibility of water (the unprinted part) and oil (the part printed with ink), as in *Ohne Titel* (1970) by Fritz Wotruba. Despite the fact that the printing press is also used here to transfer the ink to the paper, there are often barely discernible recessed areas, so-called 'platemarks', in the paper. The sheet of *Hommage à Picasso* (1974) by Louise Nevelson is, however, completely flat because the ink for the screen print, a form of porous printing, has been forced through a fine mesh onto the substrate. Finally, for the pigment print *Choices* (2019) by Jessica Stockholder, liquid ink has been sprayed onto the paper.