

Drypoints by Birger Sandzén and Other Artists from the Permanent Collection



Detail of *The Toy* by William Lee Hankey

Drypoint is a printmaking process very similar to etching, but instead of using acid to cut lines in a metal plate, they are inscribed directly with a sharp, pointed tool. The incising process leaves an imperceptibly ragged edge, or burr, which holds ink and produces a soft, slightly fuzzy, line. Once the plate is incised, ink is rubbed on the surface and the excess is wiped away. Paper is laid on the inked surface and both are run through a press under extreme pressure.

Wendy Thompson, on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's website, describes drypoint as "The simplest method for producing intaglio prints. . . Drypoint, however, is not a very practical technique for producing multiple images, for the delicate burr wears away so quickly that only a small number of good impressions, no more than a dozen, can be taken from the plate. For artists who wished to create a large number of high-quality impressions from the same plate (a large edition), this medium had limited appeal. A well-engraved plate can produce several hundred impressions, at times even a thousand, while a woodblock can generate many more."

This corridor exhibition features a number of drypoints from the Gallery's permanent collection along with those done by Birger Sandzén. The majority of the non-Sandezén prints are drawn from the Gallery's John P. Harris Collection. The John P. Harris Collection was a gift of thirty-nine prints and one painting to the Birger Sandzén Memorial Gallery from noted Hutchinson journalist John (Jack) P. Harris (1901–1969). The Gallery received the collection in 1964 and all were collected during Harris' travels in America and abroad.

As a printmaker, Birger Sandzén worked in three primary mediums: lithography, block printing (including woodcuts, nailcuts, and linoleum cuts) and drypoints. He was drawn to printmaking for many reasons – including his appreciation for printmakers of the past and the realization that his work could be more accessible to the general population. In creating editions, Sandzén rarely pulled his own prints – which he referred to as "proofs" – electing instead to have outside professionals do the work. Beginning in 1916 and continuing until 1952, he produced 207 lithographs, 94 block prints, and 27 drypoints.

Sandzén's first drypoint, *Light and Shadows*, was completed in early March of 1918. The plate was printed four times and then another larger plate, *Rocks and Clouds* was printed in an edition of 10. Since neither Sandzén nor the Bethany Art Department owned a press, he had the editions printed by Joseph Leslie Hempstead (1884-1965) in Chicago. Sandzén continued to have drypoints printed in small editions up until 1938.

The Graphic Work of Birger Sandzén written by Sandzén's son-in-law, Charles Pelham Greenough, 3rd, is an excellent resource for information on Sandzén's prints. Greenough describes many of his processes and lists all of his prints – with reproductions of approximately 60. Staff have also compiled a working catalogue raisonné that's available for viewing at www.sandzen.org/prints/.



Birger Sandzén
- MEMORIAL GALLERY -

401 N. First Street, PO Box 348, Lindsborg, KS 67456
(785) 227-2220 sandzengallery@gmail.com www.sandzen.org
Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m.