

American Prints and Printmakers, Una Johnson, 1980

In her book, Una Johnson, former Print Curator at the Brooklyn Museum discussed Schanker's work and discussed several links to Atelier 17 (William Hayter).

.....

The 1940's and 1950's/pg. 82

In 1940, Louis Schanker, whose woodcuts in color had first appeared in the later 1930s, began teaching his methods and new approaches to the woodcut medium to a small group of artists at the New School in New York. For a brief season Schanker and his fellow artists shared a small, cramped studio with Hayter's Atelier 17. Soon, however, such quarters became far too small, and Atelier 17 was moved to an independent studio in a nearby section of Greenwich Village. In 1942 Schanker began a long series of very large woodcuts in color that included *Don Quixote and Sancho Panza* and *Abstract Landscape*. In them he first explored the possibilities of printing a solid black on which he then overprinted other colors. The colors thus overprinted on undampened Japan paper have an enhanced richness and luminosity. *Carnival*, a woodcut issued in 1948, is a tour de force in the extended range of colors made possible by skillful overprinting and the controlled movement of abstract images in two-dimensional space. (See color illustration no. 1.) Schanker's intuitive sense of rich color and his ability to successfully employ it in his gouaches and woodcuts had a strong influence on his own painting and on those of his contemporaries. An intricate study in the movement of large, diversified forms within a composition is carried out in his woodcut *Static and Revolving*, issued in 1948. The intermingling of colors and large gestural circular images with many variations became the leitmotiv of Schanker's graphic work throughout the 1950s.

Extensions of the Printed Image/pg. 155

Plaster Relief Prints

Compositions in plaster with their sharply cut-out areas and pulsating lines were part of the experimental work at Atelier 17 in New York. These were imaginatively developed by the painter John Ferren in his rare plaster relief plaques "pulled" from inked metal plates. Misch Kohn, from 1952 to 1957, printed his large-scale wood engravings under extreme pressure to obtain deeply embossed surfaces of unusual richness. Notable examples are his *Kabuki Samurai* of 1954 and *Processional*, issued in 1955.

In 1960 Louis Schanker issued a series of woodcut plaster prints in which he introduced in a heavily embossed picture frame, semblance of a third dimension. Such prints approach low-relief sculpture by exploiting the expansional properties of the paper itself and also ingenious printing methods. This idea had been employed at Atelier 17 in inkless embossments and also in the metal prints of Rolf Nesch. However, Schanker's work in the relief woodcut and plaster relief print was an unusual innovation. Because of the complicated printing procedures Schanker printed only small editions or a few artist's

Ideas and Images of the 1960's and 1970's/pg. 199

In the summer of 1978 Schanker again returned to woodcuts in a series of very large prints often printed in as many as ten colors. These late works are composed of intricately cut curved shapes printed in black which are combined with other flat abstract forms in a surging array of clear, high-keyed colors. These large compositions are achieved in a single printing, the entire operation being carried out by the artist. The graphic oeuvre of Louis Schanker (see also p. 82), with its bold, forthright images and its range of color nuances, lucidly documents the versatility of the twentieth-century relief print and the imaginative utilization of a printing technique.