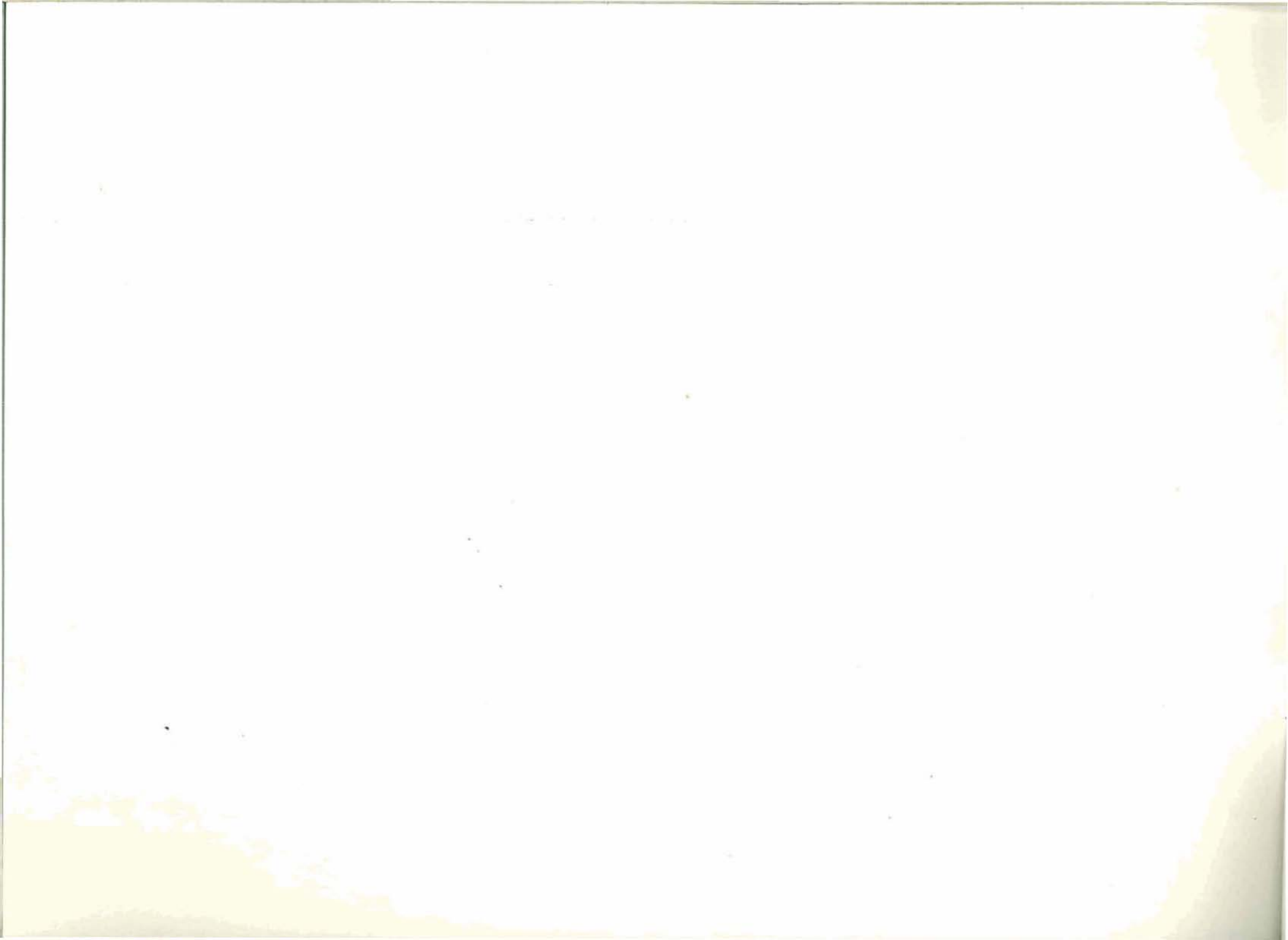


Gabor Peterdi *Printmaker*

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New Zealand 1978




Gabor Peterdi 1915-

*A collection of prints 1947-1977,
organised by the
Robert McDougall Art Gallery,
Christchurch, New Zealand.*

Peterdi -

New Zealand 1978



Printed at The Caxton Press, Christchurch
Design and typography by Max Hailstone
Photographs by Joseph Szaszfai U.S.A.

Foreword

The work of Gabor Peterdi is not widely known in New Zealand. Students of printmaking will be familiar with his indispensable book '*Printmaking*', but few will have had the opportunity to view a large body of his work at first hand.

By his teaching, as a member of juries and boards of selection, as a writer and lecturer, through his personal contacts with so many young artists, Gabor Peterdi has played an important role in the current renaissance in printmaking.

Gabor Peterdi was a guest exhibitor at the Christchurch Arts Festival International of Drawings in March, 1978. His drawing '*Mad Garden*' was reproduced on the catalogue cover, the original now being in the Permanent Collection of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.

We are indebted to Barry Cleavin who encouraged the idea of the exhibition, and to Mr Peterdi for making the fifty-three prints available to us at short notice. We also acknowledge his kindness and assistance in bringing this stimulating collection to an appreciative audience.

Bruce Robinson
13-6-78

35

RED LANIKAI 1969

Relief etching on zinc with
three colours

50 x 60.5 40/75



40-75

Red Lanikai

Printed by Tony

Gabor Peterdi

1 'Printmaking' Gabor Peterdi

Gabor Peterdi could almost not help become an artist. Born in 1915 in Budapest, then a cultured and gay city, little touched by the ravages of the First World War. His poet parents — Andor Peterdi and Zseni Varnai provided him with an environment in which poetry and art were natural and exciting pursuits.

In 1929, the 14 year old Peterdi began his study of Art at the Hungarian Academy and held his first one-man show the following year in the Ernst Museum in Budapest, after which he was awarded the coveted *Prix de Rome* for painting. He studied in Rome for one year, supporting himself as a wrestler in a circus, selling postcards and singing on the streets. He was immersed in the work of the Italian Renaissance painters, in particular Pisanello, Mantegna and the Florentines, and painting large classical compositions.

In 1931 he moved to Paris where he was to remain until 1939. Paris was then the capital of the art world, famous for its haunting beauty and exotic life. It was a haven for the *avant garde* movement, many of whom were friends of Peterdi's and certainly being in Paris then was an essential ingredient in the life of a young artist.

Peterdi soon made contact with Stanley William Hayter who had established his Atelier 17 Studio, attracting numerous painters and sculptors with surrealist leanings. Hayter placed less emphasis on attracting printmakers, rather artists who could use and develop the print media as another means of expression. Over the years Max Ernst, Giacometti, Miro, Chagall, Tanguy, Braque, Leger and Picasso, came to participate in this new adventure in graphic art.

Of the years with Hayter Peterdi writes: *'My experience with the graphic arts began with engraving. I fell in love with it and I engraved for several years before I made my first etching. This self-imposed limitation had no reason other than the fascination of exploring thoroughly this pure and powerful technique. When I began to work with the various methods of etching I became aware of the immense range of the medium, and plunged into a period of feverish experimentation. Today I think I can say without much exaggeration that I have made prints with practically every known major process in graphic art. Obviously some of these are more suited to my temperament and working method than others, but I discovered this only by trying them. Procedures that did not seem very useful at first proved to be invaluable on many occasions later on. I am against the idea of specialisation, even in technique. I am also convinced that the more you know about your craft, the freer you can be from it. My interpretation of freedom has nothing to do with sloppy or careless technique; that is a caricature of freedom. To me real freedom*

*arrives when the artist's creative instinct can function without limitation and without consciousness of technical means.'*¹

Enthusiastic as the artists of Paris were for the growth of a new art, they could not ignore the turmoil in Spain and Germany in the mid-30's. The Civil War in his native Spain had moved Picasso to print *'Minotauremachie'* in 1935. Increasingly artists became pre-occupied with themes of destruction. The unreason and sense of foreboding were expressed in symbols of the minotaur, the bull, the disembowelled horse and clashing figures. Peterdi's early fantastic figures, and symbols, merge with the theme of the bull and the recumbent figure in his *'Black Bull'* series of engravings.

In 1939 — as did many other artists — Peterdi left Europe for the United States. Following an exhibition at the Julian Levy Gallery in New York, Peterdi moved to Florida where he worked on a farm. Disturbed by the ravages of Europe his career as an artist seemed remote so he immersed himself in physical work. On becoming a United States Citizen he entered the United States Army Intelligence and later assisted in the capture of Hungarian war criminals in Austria.

Five years were to lapse before he was able to resume printmaking in the relocated Hayter's New York Atelier. Memories of the war dominated his work and it was in 1946 that he issued two powerful prints *'Crucifixion'* and *'Still Life in Germany'*.

In 1947 a new theme entered his work, the elemental forces of nature, to which *'Adam and Eve'* the earliest print in this exhibition belongs. The artist has set two imposing somewhat surrealist figures against a patterned background. In spite of its sophistication it carries with it an engaging reminder of folk prints.

By 1949 Peterdi was teaching at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, where he had established the Graphic Workshop. His fine craftsmanship, demand for competence and originality attracted a number of young artists whose studies had been interrupted by the war.

Peterdi and his wife moved into the country in 1951 to a quiet house, a pleasant garden, and a studio big enough to allow printmaking and painting. During the ensuing eight years Peterdi produced a great number of his most important prints.

Painting for Peterdi is *'... a physical and emotional necessity. Some things I can say in line; others in colour'*. He has had, during the past twenty years numerous one-man shows featuring paintings, prints, and drawings.

The Graphic Workshop in Brooklyn gave way to a teaching post at Hunter College in New York, and finally to his present appointment as Professor of Art at Yale University.

In the next few years Peterdi worked on two series of prints; *'The Fight for Survival'* and *'The Triumph of Life'*. The print *'Heralds of Awakening'* in this exhibition belongs to the latter series. Here the artist has returned again to his theme of the web as it holds within its magic filaments the colours and the rhythmic forces of nature.

Out of a dozen large prints produced in 1958 *'Angry Waves'* contrasts the explosive luminous moments in nature, with *'Cathedral'* in which the mood is more contemplative. The suitable themes are enhanced by lacy textures and the rich tone of the ink.

In 1961 Peterdi and his wife went on a trip through the deserts and mountains of Colorado, California, and Arizona where the artist's fascination with ancient rock formations was stimulated by the gigantic wind-sculptured and dramatic landscape. How frail man must have seemed compared to the creative force of nature. The prints *'Dark Mountain'* and *'Desert I'* were the fruits of this expedition.

Forever a traveller, Peterdi has visited Mexico, Yucatan, some South American countries and in 1963 he took part in a seminar at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. A flight over the arctic regions provided him with a new experience in landscape. It was a landscape where the ice glistens with harsh blue light, where the forms are jagged and the colours intense. The experience reflected in his work *'Arctic Forms III'* where the forms are angular, the colours, cold blues, blacks and shadowy purples.

Travelling to a warmer clime in 1968, Peterdi was artist in residence at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. His reaction to the luxurious tropical growth with its fabulous colour densities was immediate. Ten or more prints represent the Hawaiian series. A large vertical composition *'Laiie III'* and the vibrating sensuous colour of *'Red Lanikai'* are two examples of a great heightened colour palette, conveying a mood of the rich flamboyance of a tropical environment.

Talking about his own feelings in relation to printmaking as an art Peterdi states: *'There is no doubt that the production of a great number of original prints from a plate is an economic and social asset. This aspect, however, has very little to do with my interest in printmaking. I make prints because in using the metal, the wood, and all the other materials available I can express things that I cannot express by any*

*other means. In other words, I am interested in printmaking not as a means of reproduction, but as an original, creative medium. Even if I could pull only one print from each of my plates I would still make them.'*²

Since 1930 Gabor Peterdi's work has been seen in over 150 one-man exhibitions, including 24 retrospectives.

His work is included in the Permanent Collections of over 150 institutions around the world. In New Zealand he is represented in the Permanent Collections of Auckland City Art Gallery and the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch.

Among 40 prizes, grants, and other honours accorded the artist are the following:

Prix de Rome, 1930
Gold Medal for Mural W. J. Lurcat, Paris Exhibition, 1937
American Color Print Society Annual, 1951
Purchase Prize, 10th Brooklyn Museum Annual, 1956
Purchase Prize, Oakland Museum, 1957
Sesnan Gold Medal of Oils, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1958
Purchase Award, Seattle Art Museum, 1960
Purchase Award, The Pasadena Art Museum, 1960
Pennel Medal, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1961
Purchase Award, International Graphic Exhibition, Lugano, 1962
Museum of Western Art Prize, Tokyo Biennial, 1964
Guggenheim Fellowship, 1964-65

Bruce Robinson

Catalogue

Measurements in centimetres, height before width

- 1
ADAM AND EVE 1947
Etching, engraving
50.2 × 39.8 22/35
- 2
HERALDS OF AWAKENING 1952
Etching, engraving, aquatint on zinc with four stencilled colours
50.2 × 60.7 31/35
- 3
CHOPPY OCEAN 1957
Etching, engraving on zinc
30 × 60.3 34/35
- 4
WINTER I 1957
Etching, engraving
45.3 × 60.7 6/35
- 5
WINTER II 1957
Etching, engraving
45.1 × 60.4
- 6
YELLOW LIGHT 1958
Etching, engraving, aquatint on zinc with two rolled surface colours
50.2 × 60.5 13/30
- 7
ANGRY WAVES 1958
Engraving, etching, aquatint on zinc with three stencilled colours
50.4 × 60.7 5/30
- 8
WINDBLOWN 1958
Etching, engraving, aquatint on zinc with three stencilled colours, overprinted with the intaglio plate
50.2 × 60.4 27/30
- 9
DARK LANDSCAPE 1958
Etching, engraving, aquatint on zinc with five stencilled colours
50.3 × 60.6 23/30
- 10
CATHEDRAL 1958
Etching, engraving
80.4 × 57.4 7/30
- 11
THUNDER 1959
Etching, engraving
30 × 40.2 6/35
- 12
THE BIG WINTER 1959
Etching, engraving
55.2 × 79.5 29/30
- 13
SELF PORTRAIT 1959
Etching, engraving
60.5 × 45 6/30
- 14
THE BULL
Etching, engraving
60.7 × 45.2 3/35
- 15
VOLCANOS 1961
Relief etching, soft ground, hard ground
57.5 × 83 7/50
- 16
DARK MOUNTAIN 1961
Relief etching, aquatint, engraving
57.4 × 82.8 18/50
- 17
DESERT I 1961
Soft ground, hard ground etching, engraving, aquatint on zinc and one stencilled colour printed from two plates
50.4 × 60.5 45/50
- 18
CLIFFS (FIRST VERSION) 1961
Soft ground etching, aquatint, engraving on zinc
55.5 × 75.2 9/50

19
CLIFFS II 1961
Etching, engraving, aquatint
50.4 × 80 23/50

20
OREGON COAST 1962
Engraving, etching
29.7 × 42.6 24/50

21
OREGON COAST II 1962
Etching, engraving
45.4 × 37.5 3/50

22
DREAMING DEAD 1962
Relief and line etching, aquatint
37.6 × 45.2 3/50

23
RESURRECTION II 1963
Etching, engraving
60.5 × 50.1 26/50

24
THE BIG NORPOLK 1963
Etching, engraving
55.4 × 90.8 4/50

25
TIME OF THE BEAST 1964
Etching, engraving
91 × 55.6 11/25

26
LOW TIDE 1964
Etching, engraving
45.3 × 60.6 12/50

27
SEA AND SKY 1965
Combined techniques, colour
45 × 60.4 22/50

28
SEA MARSH 1966
Etching, engraving
28 × 35.1

29
UNIVERSE 1966
Etching, engraving
35 × 27.6

30
AQUARIUM 1966
Relief, etching, soft ground etching, colour
35.2 × 27.6

31
A GENESIS 1966
Etching, engraving, colour
35.3 × 28

32
ELEGY 1967
Etching, engraving in two panels
13.5 × 26.9 top
20.3 × 26.9 bottom

33
YELLOW LANIKAI 1969
Relief etching on zinc with colour
60.5 × 50 14/75

34
SURF 1969
Etching, engraving
45.1 × 60.6 87/150

35
RED LANIKAI 1969
Relief etching on zinc with three colours
50 × 60.5 40/75

36
ARCTIC NIGHT 1969
Etching, engraving, aquatint, colour
91.2 × 60.6 19/25

37
THICKET II 1969
Etching, engraving
29.8 × 45.2 100/150

38
LAIE II 1970
Etching, engraving, colour
91.7 × 68 7/15

39
LAIE III 1971
Etching, engraving, aquatint
55.7 × 70.5 6/75

40
PALI I 1972
Dry point
35.5 × 25.6 Artist's proof III

41
PALI III 1972
Dry point
35.2 × 25.5 14/15

42
SURGING WAVE II 1972
Dry point
35.7 × 25.3 12/15

43
HAIKU GARDEN II 1972
Dry point
55.8 × 70.3 8/15

44
KAHUKU REEF I 1972
Dry point
55.8 × 70.6 13/15

45
KAUAI CACTUS I 1972
Dry point
55.8 × 70.1 6/15

46
SPALDING GARDEN 1972
Etching, engraving
31.3 × 45 Artist's proof 6/10

47
PREGNANT REEF 1973
Etching, engraving, colour
60.6 × 90.5 1/25

48
LAUA 1973
Relief, etching, colour
60.6 × 90.5 Artist's proof V

49
GULLS IN THE WIND 1973
Dry point
50.2 × 60.5 9/25

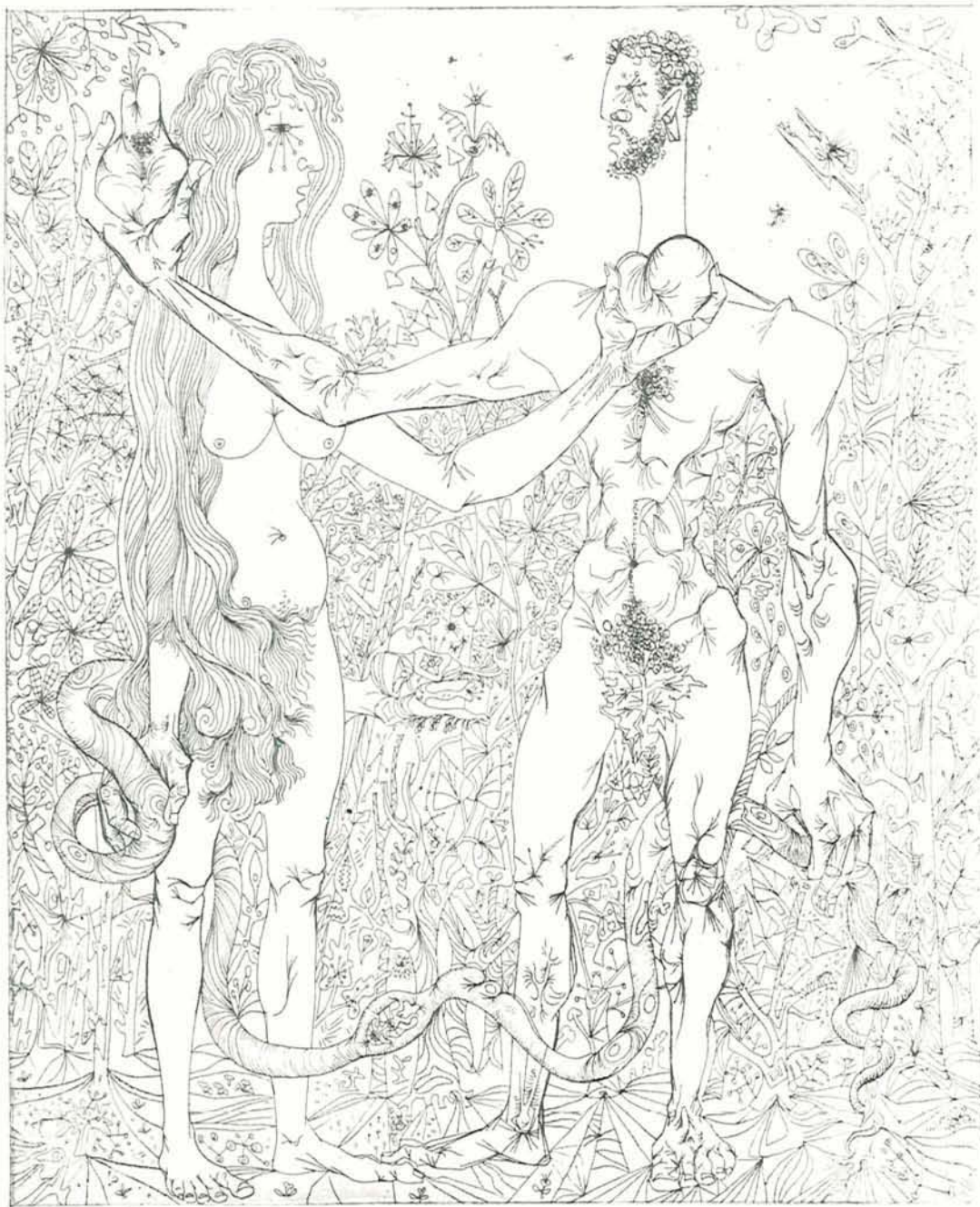
50
SELF PORTRAIT 60 1975
Dry point
70.5 × 55.5 8/8

51
CELEBRATION 1977
Relief etching, two colours
50.2 × 60.6 6/25

52
CLAWS OF THE SEA 1977
Etching, engraving, dry point
75.9 × 101.5 11/25

53
THE BIG GARDEN 1977
Etching, engraving
60.7 × 90.5 2/35

1
ADAM AND EVE 1947
Etching, engraving
50.2 x 39.8 22/35

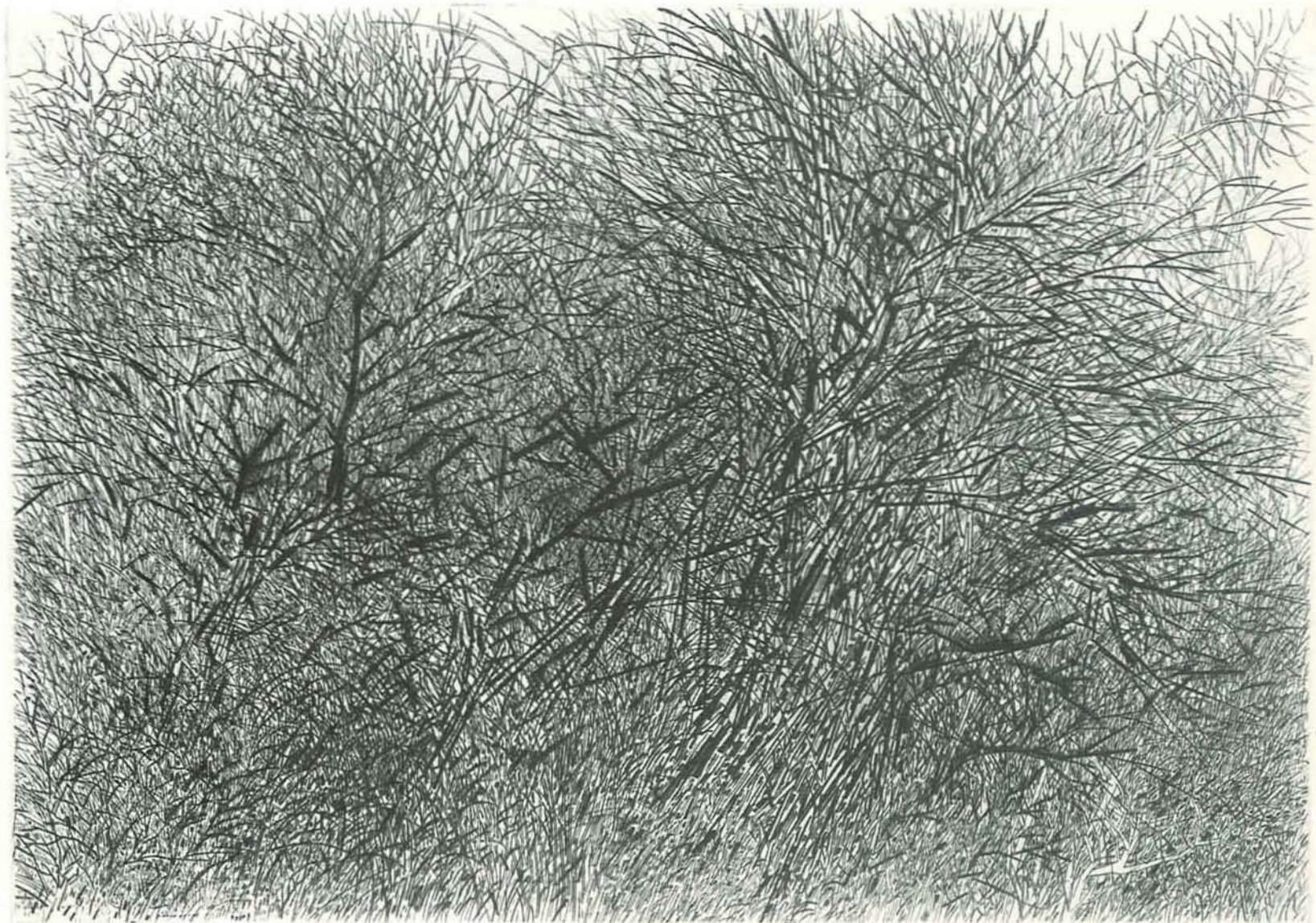


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THE BIG WINTER 1959

Etching, engraving

60.5 x 45 6/30

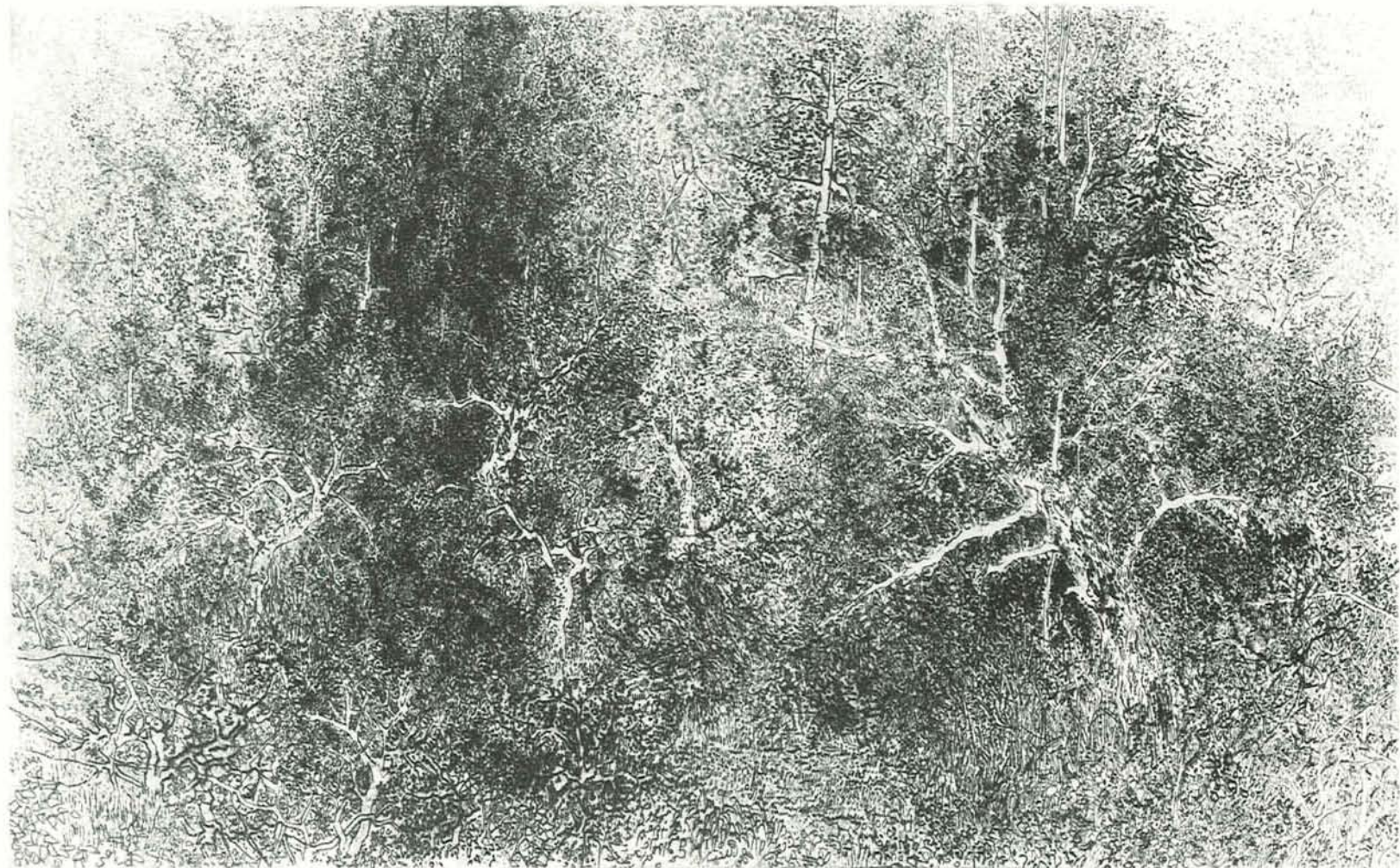


24

THE BIG NORFOLK 1963

Etching, engraving

55.4 x 90.8 4/50



43
HAIKU GARDEN II 1972
Dry point
55.8 x 70.3 8/15



Haiku Garden II

1972

45

KAUAI CACTUS I 1972

Dry point

55.8 x 70.1 6/15



50
SELF PORTRAIT 60 1975
Dry point
70.5 x 55.5 8/8

