

ANTONIO FRASCONI

AN ARTIST'S JOURNAL



Edited by Janet B. Steck
Designed by Lorraine Heasley

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Antonio Frasconi: An Artist's Journal

An exhibition organized for the Dowd Fine Arts Gallery of the State University of New York College at Cortland by Janet B. Steck

Exhibition Itinerary

Dowd Fine Arts Gallery, State University of New York
College at Cortland, Cortland, New York
October 13 through November 10, 1989

Tyler Art Gallery, State University of New York College
at Oswego, Oswego, New York
January 19 through February 23, 1990

University Art Museum, State University of New York at
Binghamton, Binghamton, New York
March 3 through April 6, 1990

University Art Gallery, State University of New York at
Albany, Albany, New York
June 26 through August 3, 1990

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Foreword

Antonio Frasconi is an exceptional figure in the contemporary arts world. Internationally known as an artist and legendary as a teacher of art, he is at the pinnacle of a dual artist/educator career which is deservedly and widely noted. Museums and discriminating private collectors seek his works for their collections; important publishers invite him to illustrate the texts of limited edition, trade volumes; colleagues credit him as being largely responsible for the current revival of the woodcut print tradition; and art students apply for admission to the State University of New York College at Purchase's Division of Visual Arts in order, specifically, to study with him.

He is, furthermore, the recipient of many prestigious awards. In terms of the number of recognitions he has received plus the diversity, as well as the stature, of the granting entities which have selected him for honors, Frasconi is unusually distinguished. Guggenheim fellowships, National Academy Design prizes, two SUNY awards (on separate occasions) for superior teaching, and a Grand Prix of the Venice International Film Festival are but a few honors which have been bestowed on this artist.

His exhibition history is equally impressive as a record of achievement. In total it reflects the extent to which his work is regarded not only as being at the forefront of contemporary printmaking but, in addition, as having a creative and personal style

of expression that makes it both relevant and timeless. Works by Frasconi have been featured in solo and group exhibitions presented by museums throughout the United States, Europe and Latin America. Just recently, to take two separate examples, *Involvement: The Graphic Art of Antonio Frasconi*, an exhibit of Frasconi works concerned with the artist's ideas about various socio-political events, was curated by Edith Tonelli and circulated from the West to the East Coast by the Wight Gallery of U.C.L.A., and several Frasconi prints appeared in the highly acclaimed *Committed to Print* exhibition curated by Deborah Wye for the Museum of Modern Art.

Antonio Frasconi's reputation on many accounts is, indeed, well established, and a retrospective exhibition of his works is clearly earned and timely. Thus, when the exhibit *Antonio Frasconi: An Artist's Journal* was first discussed at the State University of New York College at Cortland more than a year ago, it aroused immediate enthusiasm and support from students and faculty alike. The opportunity to have a substantial representation of Frasconi's oeuvre, spanning from the early 1950s through the present, in our Gallery appealed to everyone concerned. His control of and inventiveness in print methods, the range of his subject matter—from silent, sensitive images of seasonal changes along the Long Island Sound shoreline to the brutal and harsh portray-

als of innocent victims of political suppression—and his signature style, that combines expressive line with woodgrain textures and strong contrasts of black and white, would make this an exhibit all could appreciate. There is much to see in and learn from his works.

For these reasons and because Antonio Frasconi is a distinguished member of the State University of New York family, the notion to expand *Antonio Frasconi: An Artist's Journal* as a travelling exhibit for circulation to other SUNY institutions seems particularly appropriate. After all, here is an artist whose contributions to the State University system and achievements in the visual arts are well known far beyond New York State's borders. What other rationale, therefore, is needed to underline the importance of this exhibit for the publics served by the State University of New York and for its community of students, faculty and staff?

The addition to the exhibition catalogue of four essays brings to this exhibit's audiences fresh views of the artist, the statements he makes through his work, and his use of the woodcut medium. In the introductory article "Antonio Frasconi," George Parrino, Dean of the Division of Visual Arts at Purchase and, himself, an artist, provides a personal tribute to the individual, who—never compromising—always integrates his humanistic and creative ideals into all aspects of his life. The second and third selections, by

David Craven, Professor of Art History at the State University of New York College at Cortland and by Patricia Hills, Professor of Art History at Boston University, respectively, utilize both the critic's and the historian's approach. Each examines Frasconi, the artist, in the context of his own development, of the social and political realities that have provoked his visual voice, and of those movements which have articulated stylistic issues in the print media. The final and fourth contribution by Associate Professor of Art History Frederick Zimmerman explains the woodcut print process and analyzes Frasconi's use of it. Together, these writings present a multi-faceted insight into the person, the artist, the educator and the citizen on the occasion of this retrospective exhibition.

Janet B. Steck
Director
Dowd Fine Arts Gallery

Acknowledgments

Antonio Frasconi: An Artist's Journal would not be possible without the generous support and assistance of many others, including some who are not affiliated with the State University of New York. I am indebted to them all.

In organizing the exhibit, I turned to my colleagues at Cortland College for help on many occasions. Charles Heasley, Associate Professor of Art and a printmaker, is among them. He accompanied me on my first trip to visit with Antonio in Purchase and to view selected works. Later, he offered expert opinion on display methods which would assure the works' protection without interfering with a stimulating and appropriate presentation of them. Dawn Van Hall, College Photographer, is another whose expertise made a difference. In addition to relying on her advice concerning certain photo reproduction options, I depended on her ability and willingness to fill my requests in an efficient and timely manner. I also am grateful to Alice Greene, Art Department Secretary, and Kay Wilkins at the College Print Shop for applying their word processing and typesetting skills to preparations for the exhibit and the catalogue. In addition to these individuals, I called upon College resources and particularly appreciate having had access to the Sperry Learning Resource Center and to the College Relations Department. And finally, on a local note, I want to

thank Colleen Kattau for her proof-reading of Spanish text. If oversights occur, they are mine, not hers.

Off campus assistance was forthcoming as well. Especially helpful was John Mastracchio, Master Printer at the Division of Visual Arts at the State University of New York at Purchase, whose experience in handling valuable works of art facilitated careful preparation of Frasconi works for travel from Purchase to Cortland. Additional preparations of Frasconi works occurred even farther afield. For his effort in making the necessary arrangements at the University of Iowa, I want to acknowledge Jeff Martin, Registrar of the University of Iowa Museum of Art.

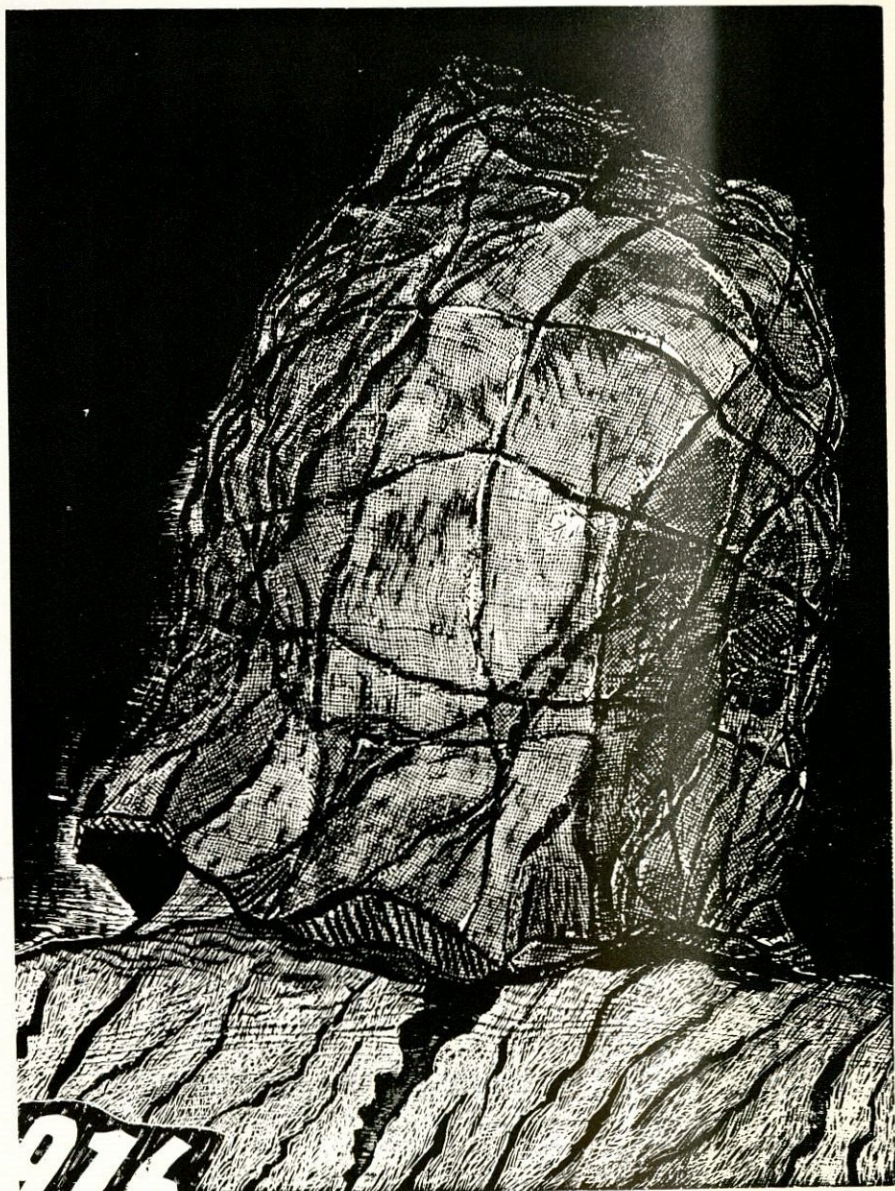
Acknowledgements would not be complete without recognition of the two principle funders of the exhibition. They include the Auxiliary Services Corporation of the State University of New York College at Cortland and the Cortland College Student Association.

JBS

Los Desaparecidos VIII, (Los Ecapuchados), 1986

woocut

24 x 36



Antonio Frasconi

Antonio Frasconi is a forthright man with basic values. He both celebrates life's full bounty and expresses rage at its injustice or inhumanity. He has successfully woven the deep passions of his life, his art and his teaching into whole cloth: his grace in preparing a simple meal; his love of art, literature, film and music; his family life with artist/wife Leona, filmmaker/son Pablo and musician/son Miguel; his involvement with an astonishing circle of friends accomplished in the arts and humanities; and always, his deep commitment to human rights.

He was born in 1919 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, of Italian emigrant parents who soon moved across the Rio de la Plata to Montevideo, Uruguay. The Italo/Hispanic culture in which he grew up and the fermenting politics of South America helped to shape his early values. The political cartoons of the 30's about the coming wars in Europe impressed upon him that one could make a statement both political and artistic. This conviction grew through the 40's when he moved to New York to study with George Grosz (who, unfortunately, had moved) and travelled to Mexico to meet Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros; and continues throughout his life.

As a mature artist, Frasconi would have to be cited as one of the most important printmakers working today and as one centrally responsible for the current revival of the woodcut. Critics have said that he is

the most important woodcut artist in this hemisphere and that it would not be possible to find a more distinguished American printmaker.

His subject matter covers a phenomenal range—man, nature, machine—the beautiful, the ugly. And, for him, all of life is indeed grist for the artist's mill: the lyrical subject of migratory birds from the Long Island Sound tidal marshes near his home in South Norwalk; the many children's books created as part of his sons' education; the respect for honest labor observed in man-made objects and the dignity of migrant workers; the social conscience in his political cartoons; the rage against tyranny in *Los Desaparecidos* (*The Missing*); and the profound triumph of humanity in the years of illustrations for Whitman, Thoreau, Poe, Frost, Lorca, Nerudo, Mistral and Singer.

Antonio was always clear about the responsibility of the artist to be part of the world and wanted to reach the largest possible audience, so the art of the book and printmaking were natural vehicles. His tools are simple, his palette bold and primary colors, his forms direct and honest, flattened to rhythmic motifs.

He has said that life is a constant learning process. And so it is. After 50 years as a woodcut artist, Antonio still enjoys a youthful spirit of discovery in exploring the newest technology. After receiving a grant from the Xerox Corporation in 1978 to experiment with color-copying as a

medium, he successfully created new work by this process. It was no surprise that some of the resulting prints were purchased by the Museum of Modern Art or that, later, one was awarded The Canon Prize by the National Academy of Design. And, perhaps, it is this ever-youthful curiosity which allows him to so successfully inspire the young.

It has been said that Antonio Frasconi is among the "pillars" of print-making educators along with Gabor Peterdi and Mauricio Lansansky (both now retired). At a time when few truly accomplished artists are drawn to the profession of teaching, Antonio is firmly committed to it. He came to teaching in 1973 at the age of 54, after a full life maturing as an artist. The breadth of cultural experience acquired in the arts and humanities during that time commands great respect and admiration from his students, and he, in turn, treats students as professionals, expecting and receiving no less than their best. It, also, is clear that the depth of his teaching comes not only from a mastery of the medium and his maturity as an artist, but from his deep commitment to humanitarian ideals.

He possesses great dedication, humor, warmth, humility, insight and wisdom. He is direct, simple and accessible. It has also been said by one of his colleagues at Purchase that he has tireless interest in the intellectual advancement of each of his students and that he has the ability

to inspire in them a sense of commitment and passion about their work. A constant reminder to his students as they learn the complex media of art is to not lose that which brought them to art in the first place; and it is clear that, again, he teaches by example. It is no wonder that he enjoys the unqualified admiration of his colleagues and is "adored" by his students.

While it is indeed rare for any individual to develop the sustained stature as an artist culminating in a 50 year retrospective, it is rarer still for this to be accompanied with a genuine gift for teaching. For this extraordinary achievement, Antonio Frasconi was recognized in 1983 with the *Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching* and in 1986 with the *Distinguished Professorship Award* of the State University of New York.

George Parrino

Dean and Professor of Visual Arts
The State University of New York at
Purchase

Frasconi's Multi-cultural and Engagé Prints

The directness, if not simplicity, of Antonio Frasconi's most powerful woodcuts is a result of the complex intersection of various visual languages and diverse conceptual interests. Some of his works feature themes related to the populist tradition of social realism, yet the best of these images are frequently conveyed with a visual disjuncture that recalls Brecht's concern both with making gestures quotable and with undermining classical closure. In these cases, Frasconi's prints advance beyond populist values to a more sophisticated level of critical dialogue with the viewer, than the visual sloganeering that much populist imagery permits. Other works by Frasconi feature an interplay with literary texts (such as, in his illustrations for poems by Pablo Neruda, García Lorca, and Bertolt Brecht),¹ yet many of these images are in a forceful, non-illustrative visual language that denies the anecdotal asides and narrative conventions used in traditional "literary" art. Indeed, Frasconi has insisted on his role as an "interpreter" of historical events, in contradistinction to being an "illustrator" of them.²

All of Frasconi's prints involve a sophisticated assimilation of certain European artistic vocabularies—those of Paul Gauguin, Käthe Kollwitz, and Honoré Daumier come to mind most readily—yet Frasconi ultimately uses these visual forms in a non-Eurocentric way that recalls the popular cultural forms

(such as, the *calavera* figures) of Mexican printmaker José Guadalupe Posada, in addition to the rich artisanal traditions of woodcarving among Native Americans, Afro-Americans, and Latin Americans. Ironically, Frasconi's internationalist treatment of pressing issues from many countries, including the United States (where he is now a Distinguished Teaching Professor at the State University of New York at Purchase) has led a commentator from *Time* magazine to claim that Frasconi is "the U.S.'s foremost woodcut artist."³ Yet Frasconi, who is an Argentinian-born artist from Uruguay, has always opposed the hegemonic aspirations and hierarchical designs in the "other Americas" of certain sectors from the U.S. In 1984, for example, Frasconi made a poster, entitled *Viva el Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*, to underscore his own solidarity with the current process of self-determination in Nicaragua.

Contrary to what another U.S. critic has erroneously said of some of Frasconi's Latin American contemporaries (Wifredo Lam of Cuba and Roberto Matta of Chile)—namely, that they are "so international...that it is difficult to think of them as Latin American at all"⁴—Frasconi, like Lam and Matta, knows that "international" art can never be equated with the homogenizing and Eurocentric culture championed by mainstream Westerners. Rather, Frasconi and other progressive Latin

American artists are internationalist precisely because of the way they are self-consciously constructing a non-Eurocentric (yet certainly European-influenced) visual language on behalf of cultural self-definition for the various countries throughout the hemisphere. "Internationalism" in the most profound sense cannot be reduced to an exclusionary and ethnocentric Western art, however global its present reach through U.S. mass culture. Instead, "international" art will be just that, namely, a synthesis of Western and non-Western artforms from both high art and popular culture. Such a synthesis, as opposed to a mere eclectic *mélange*, will partially accommodate in new aesthetic forms the experiences of heretofore disenfranchised peoples, of previously marginalized artforms, and of formerly suppressed ethnic groups, thus giving world culture a new breadth as well as an unprecedented depth.⁵

It would obviously be misguided to assume both that Antonio Frasconi's work has never been populist and that it has ever been a new chapter in post-Eurocentric art. Frasconi's anti-fascist political cartoons in the late 1930's and early 1940's—when he contributed to several of Uruguay's major papers (*El País*, *El Plata*, and *Marcha*), as well as to the leftist publication *El Línea Maginot*—are all technically accomplished but rather straight-forward drawings in the European tradition extending from Hogarth through Daumier to

Grosz. Many of these artworks are deft satires of fascist leaders, such as Franco and Hitler, that depend for their efficacy on "instant" recognizability. While Frasconi's political commitments later remained intact, his displeasure with the academic classicism then dominant in Montevideo ultimately led him to adopt the largely non-classical medium of woodcuts in 1944. His decision to take up the production of woodcuts was inspired by his encounters with those of Gauguin as well as those of the popular Uruguayan artist, Carlos González. This decision was further confirmed by his subsequent knowledge of woodcuts done by the German Expressionists.⁶

One of Frasconi's first woodcuts, *Descanso (Rest)*, is a clear example of social realism and its populist appeal, along with its Eurocentric character. In this print, two large men from the popular classes, one of whom has no shirt on, are clearly exhausted and seated. These images are obviously intended to signify either fatigue from overwork or the tiredness that comes from having no permanent place to rest, except on the streets. The bold contouring of the figures, at once fluent and awkward in rendition, in conjunction with the sparse, non-distractive setting, gives the viewer little that is not "self-evident." The heroic size and isolated individual focus of the woodcut clearly mark it with a Renaissance ancestry, even as the medium itself more directly relates to

the tradition of popular imagery both in Europe and elsewhere.⁷

Similarly, the mournful tone and instant sympathy the print elicits, along with the abovementioned traits, recall the tradition of such imagery from Millet's paintings of peasants and Picasso's blue period subjects through the Latin American contributions to this tradition, whether one has in mind the "realistic" depictions of *jibaros* by Ramón Frade and Miquel Pou of Puerto Rico, or the paintings of workers and *campesinos* by Hector Poleo of Venezuela and Candido Portinari of Brazil.⁸ All of these populist artworks are about despair along with poverty; all are works that are "universally" appreciated by people of all stations and classes in society. Just as Cornelius Vanderbilt bought Millet's most famous work, *The Man with the Hoe*, so John Berger has rightly noted that the easy sentimentality and overt anguish of poor people in Picasso's blue period has always made this work his most popular with wealthy patrons.⁹ In a word, the visual language of Frasconi's woodcut *Descanso* is more about commiserating with the down-trodden as they are, than about the dynamic transformation of society including the victims of it. For this reason, Frasconi's early woodcuts, like most other examples of social realism in the visual arts, are not far removed from such populist maxims as "the rich get richer and the poor poorer" or "the



poor will ways be with us." Yet this populist worldview involves an unacceptable contradiction. Simultaneously, its exponent expresses sympathy with the exploited, while believing that exploitation cannot be ended.

After studying at the Art Students League in New York starting in 1945, and then travelling around the U.S., however, Frasconi began a new phase of his career. This change surfaced in his notable series of five color woodcuts, the *Lettuce Workers* (1953), which was based on his experiences in California. This series

Descanso, 1944
woodcut
13 1/2 x 10 3/8

breaks with the static sense, isolated individuals, and despairing tone of his earlier and more populist woodcuts of workers as well as peasants. Here, Frasconi's subtle sense of the cinematic fully emerges for the first time, as Edith Tonelli has observed.¹⁰ Just as Frasconi has spoken of the series as a "long shot" that is "divided into five frames,"¹¹ so these rural workers are neither locked into "timeless" positions nor are they located in visually "resolved" relationships.

Furthermore, the important connection with past values, like the artisanship used to produce these woodcuts (which are always hand-printed without a printing press) is here brought into creative tension with the modernist compositional debt to cinematic shifts and to the montage aesthetic of the fragment necessitating greater viewer intervention in the completion of the work. Finally, plates VIId and VIIe of the *Lettuce Workers* entail an integration of figure and ground that is manifestly non-Western in sensibility. Oriental and pre-Columbian visual traditions are recalled both by the absence of heroic individuals dominating the landscape and by the inelegantly organic as well as "primitive" handling of the forms. It is of note that Frasconi had just begun producing in 1953 an accordion-like series of prints whose format was taken over directly from Japanese art.¹²

From the late 1950s until the present, Frasconi has developed this neo-Brechtian approach by means of an ever more broad-ranging use of different cultural forms and by an increasingly subtle quotation of gestures in addition to fragments. Paradoxically enough, heterogeneity and minimalism have frequently been allied in Frasconi's best prints, particularly those from the 1960s and the 1970s. One such exemplary set of works is Frasconi's 1962 series of woodcuts accompanying Bertolt Brecht's *"Das Lied vom SA-Mann"* (*Song of the Storm Trooper*), which is the story of how hunger drove a poor man into the service of fascism. Thus, in such a case, there must be more than some abstract identification with the marginalized person, unlike the generic demands for sympathy made on the spectator by populist images. Frasconi produced an interplay with Brecht's text through the visual citation of quotable gestures and evocative signs, along with his well orchestrated compositional discontinuities and "awkwardnesses." In turn, Frasconi's visual idiom signifies, among other things, the unsettling but not impossible nature of the historical choices to which Brecht has referred and to which we must respond.

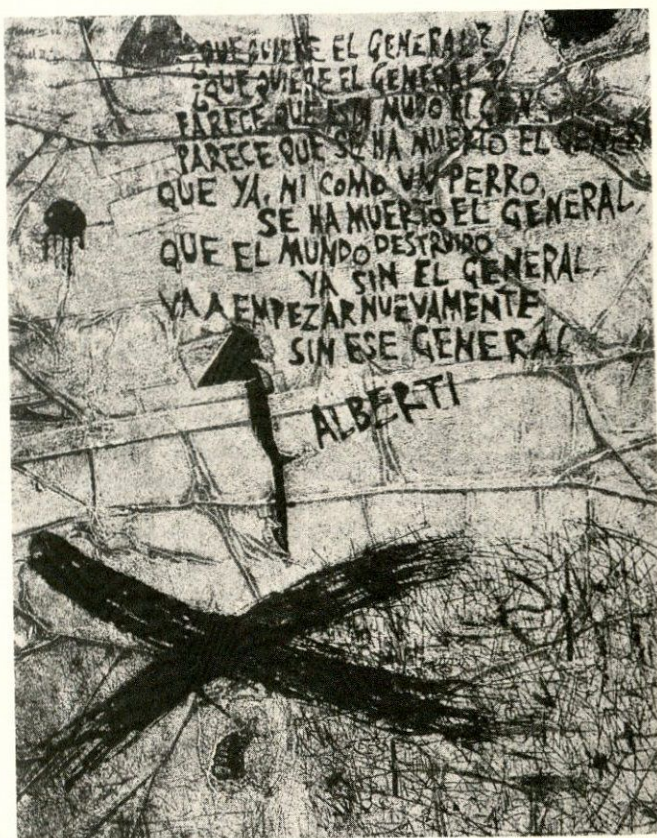
Among Frasconi's most noteworthy works is one series about the popular resistance in Spain to Franco. This is his *Walls* series of 1962, in which there is a remarkable modulation of tonality and a virtuoso use of textural distinctions, both of which

are quite impressive given the medium he is using. In *Wall II* (1962), for example, Frasconi has transposed into woodcut, a graffiti inscription of a famous poem by exiled poet Rafael Alberti against the dictatorship (Frasconi actually saw some graffiti murals like this when he visited Spain during this period). Rendered as if scratched into a public wall that has been marked by natural aging and human traces, this poem, "*Que quiere el general?*" (What Does the General Want?), ends with an uplifting view of the future:

*...Va a empezar nuevamente
Sin ese general.*

(It [life] is going to begin anew
without this general.)¹³

Aside from the way that Frasconi has here reused in his work a defiant gesture by the populace, he has also allowed people to represent themselves through his woodcut. This embrace of a popular effort at communication, along with the cultural form it took, is further linked by the formal values of Frasconi's woodcut—the flat, all-over space, heavy textured, and hand-improvised look—to the tendency of Abstract Expressionism then ascendent in Spain (in spite of Franco's disapproval), namely, the *arte matérico* of Antoni Tápies. In so doing, this inter-image dialogue underscores how in Spain, as in Cuba during the 1950s and in Nicaragua during the 1960s, there was a general perception of Abstract Expressionism as anti-fascist art.



Of Frasconi's work in this heterogeneous and recalcitrant vein after the early 1960s, three series are perhaps most outstanding: *Viet Nam!* of 1967; *The 42nd Parallel* of 1978 (a magical realist collage about his experiences in the U.S.); and *Los Desaparecidos* (1984 on), which is a soulful consideration of the victims of rightwing political repression in Uruguay and Argentina. All three of these sets of images are moving yet non-sentimental, partisan yet non-sloganeering, and clearly critical yet not cyni-

Wall II, 1962
color woodcut
30 x 23 3/4

cal. Furthermore, all of these series are as much about an inclusionary view of culture as they are about the need to educate the senses and to sustain the critical spirit. Because of the way Frasconi's prints focus on the reinterpretation of history as well as the future of historical progress, it seems appropriate to close with a poem by Brecht that "illustrates" some dimensions of Frasconi's artwork.

Entitled, "*Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters*" (*Questions of a Reading Worker*), this poem is about the rethinking of history along progressive, class-based and non Eurocentric lines. It reads as follows:

Who built the seven gates of Thebes?
The books contain the names of kings.
Was it really kings who carried the stones?
And Babylon, so many times destroyed—
Who rebuilt the city every time? In which houses
Of gold-glittering Lima lived those who built it?
On the evening when the great wall of China was complete,
Where did the masons go? Imperial Rome
Is full of triumphal arches. Who erected them? Over whom
Did the Caesars' triumph? Did oft-sung Byzantium
Have only palaces for dwellings? And even in legendary Atlantis
The night the sea rose,

Drowning men still called their slaves.
The young Alexander conquered India.
By himself?
Caesar defeated the Gauls.
Was there not even a cook in his army?
Philip of Spain cried, as his fleet
Was destroyed. Was there no one else who wept?
Frederick the Great Triumphed in the Seven Years War. Who
Triumphed with him?

Each page a victory.
What human price for each?
Every ten years a great man.
Who paid the piper?
So many accounts.
So many questions.¹⁴

David Craven
Professor of Art History
The State University of New York at Cortland

1. For a complete list of Frasconi's illustrations for texts, see: *Involvement: The Graphic Art of Antonio Frasconi* (U.C.L.A.: Wight Art Gallery, 1987), p. 55.
2. Cited in Edith A. Tonelli, "Frasconi's Art of Involvement," in *Involvement*, p. 17.
3. *Time Magazine*, June 15, 1953, p. 72. Cited in Eva Cockcroft, "The United States and Socially Concerned Latin American Art," in *The Latin American Spirit* (New York: The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1989), p. 202.
4. *Latin American Horizons* (Sarasota: Ringling Brothers Museum, 1976). Cited in Cockcroft, *loc. cit.*
5. For an excellent look at this issue, see: Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989).
6. Tonelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-19.
7. See, for example, Meyer Schapiro, "Courbet and Popular Imagery," in *Modern Art* (New York: George Braziller, 1978), pp. 47-86.
8. See: Cockcroft, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-201.
9. John Berger, *The Success and Failure of Picasso* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 42-43.
10. Tonelli, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
12. Una Johnson, "An Introduction to Antonio Frasconi," in *Involvement*, p. 7.
13. Translation from the Spanish by David Craven.
14. Translation from the German by David Craven.

Los Desaparecidos IV, 1981

woodcut

39 1/2 x 27 1/2



Los Desaparecidos—Antonio Frasconi's Witnesses for History

The "Charnel House" stands boarded up—no longer used to house interrogation and torture as it had been during the years of military dictatorship. Antonio Frasconi presents such buildings to us, in his series of five relief prints done in 1988, all called *Charnel House*, the most recent chapter of his ongoing *Desaparecidos* series. He saw such houses, windows sealed with concrete, when he visited Montevideo, Uruguay, for two months at the end of 1986, called there by the invitation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the recently installed, civilian democratic government. They were neighborhood houses that had been purchased by the dictatorship. Indeed, Frasconi captures them as such, almost banal in their architectural ordinariness and lack of humanizing or aesthetic detail—unremarkable except for the history of their functioning and those sinister windows.

In the artist's hands these Charnel Houses are more than the tombs of the tortured; they are like sentient beings, capable of springing again to life. To achieve this kind of content—the past as harbinger for the future—Frasconi used a range of subtle color to great effect. The red and magenta slivers of light slipping by the edges of the front door and blocked windows electrify the dull greys of the building and street. These eerie lights relay to us the screams from the past, long since silenced but mysteriously ever present.

In 1987, after the trip to Uruguay, the artist had done four monotype and relief prints called *Cells*, drawing the images from publications describing the human rights violations, the political arrests and detentions, the tortures and the deaths. For them, too, he used color to give blood and pulse to the austere cells where little light penetrated and the only furniture consisted of a slab for a bed and a slop bucket for personal hygiene. These are interiors of no exit, of anonymity, of inhumane death, and Frasconi's austerity and economy of shapes reinforces that content. Thus, the series *Cells* of 1987 and *Charnel House* of 1988 carve in our memory a silent but visually potent epitaph to his eight-year series *Los Desaparecidos*.

Los Desaparecidos translated into English means "the disappeared ones" but an English-speaking person readily hears the words as "the desperate ones." Frasconi began the series in 1981 when he became acutely aware of the human rights violations perpetrated in secrecy in Uruguay since the dissolution of the National Assembly by the military in June 1973. The catalyst for the series was the report from the husband of the daughter of his niece—a man who had sought refuge in the Mexican Embassy in Montevideo and had subsequently fled Uruguay for Mexico. This relative detailed to Frasconi the real fate of "disappeared" Uruguayan civilians: mem-



bers of opposition political parties, trade unionists, student radicals, priests, and communists, who had all been abducted from their homes and communities without official acknowledgment of their detention. Frasconi's outrage at these violations was fueled by published reports that were becoming available.

For his earliest images in the series, *Los Desaparecidos I* and *Los Desaparecidos II*, Frasconi looked back to his own work, such as *Homage to George Jackson* of 1971. He used to advantage his frequently used technique of incorporating broad areas of woodgrain into the image. Like the *Jackson* print, this raw look of woodgrain intensifies the content, as

if the artist quickly wanted to issue furtive broadsides graphically showing the suffering of anonymous victims lying prone with hands tied. The fourth of the series represents a line of six figures, clothed in rumpled coats and trousers, with their hands clasped to their heads as they shuffle to their indeterminate fate. The fifth gives us more information: we see almost the complete figure, lying face down, with hands clearly bound.

Indeed, as time passed Frasconi could draw on more data as he read reports from Amnesty International and Spanish-language publications. For example, in November, 1983, Amnesty International issued a ten-

page "Briefing" in English that addressed human rights violations in Uruguay. It stated:

From September 1981 to April 1982, AI obtained details of the arrest of some 64 suspected members of left-wing political parties and illegal trade union organizations. In at least 10 cases known to AI, persons were abducted by members of the security forces in the street, where there were no witnesses to the arrest. The detention was not recognized by the authorities, and the family was not informed of the place of detention or the reason for the arrest for several months. During this period, the victim had "disappeared."¹

The report went on to outline the situation for "prisoners of conscience," forced confessions, methods of torture, solitary confinement, the role of military medical staff, the conduct of trials, and concluded with recommendations.

About methods of torture, the report stated:

Evidence of torture is supported by testimonies received from ex-members of the armed forces who have described in detail the conditions which exist in army and naval detention centres, arrest procedures, and the techniques of torture allegedly employed routinely. The latter include forcing prisoners to wear hoods for weeks or even months on end, severe beatings, enforced standing for prolonged periods (*plantón*), hanging from the wrists, knees and ankles, electric shocks applied to the most sensitive parts of the body (*picana eléctrica*), near asphyxiation by means of the submersion of the head or upper parts of the body in tanks of water, sometimes polluted by excrement

(*submarino*), the forcing of prisoners to sit straddling iron or wooden bars which cut cruelly into the groin (*caballete*), burns, and sexual abuse and violation. Psychological methods which have been reported include verbal threats and abuse, simulated executions, forcing detainees to witness the torture of others, either directly or by means of tape recordings, threats of the torture of spouses or children, humiliation, and techniques of sensory disorientation.²

Such reports and photographs in magazines motivated Frascóni to search for images that would encapsulate the horror of such calculated procedures. *The Interrogation* of 1984 shows scenes of torture and of a prisoner vomiting. The hooded figure—rough burlap thickly wrapped around a victim's head—became the image for *Los Desaparecidos VI* and *VII*, both of 1986 and subtitled *Los Encapuchados*.

Estimates of the numbers of "disappeared" soared, based on the increasing availability of information. Uruguayans did not just disappear from their mother country, they also disappeared from Argentina and Brazil, two countries also controlled by military dictatorships and whose police collaborated with their counterparts in Uruguay. And, of course, there were more—citizens of Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. For an exhibition of his work at the Terry Dintenfass Gallery in 1988, Frascóni prepared a statement based on his ongoing research—an article by Gabriel García Márquez for *The*

Más de 120,000 Desaparecidos, 1983
woodcut
39 x 23 1/4



New York Times, reports by the Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared and by the Archdiocese of São Paulo, Uruguayan weeklies, as well as Amnesty International reports. Frasconi noted:

The accounts vary. History is still being written. Over 120,000 people have disappeared because of political disagreement, terrorized and tortured by the well coordinated action of the State in a war against its own people. The methods of torture ranged from medieval types to the latest psychological and electronic "devices." These methods were practiced in prisons, concentration camps and centers of clandestine torture—normal neighborhood houses, their windows sealed with concrete, the only indication of the activities inside being the agonizing cries and screams at night. This "dirty war" against so called subversives is slowly being told by the few survivors and those who witnessed the kidnapping, torture and execution of those who never returned.³

In 1983 Frasconi began doing portraits of specific individuals known to have disappeared. On a single sheet, called *Más de 120,000 Desaparecidos*, he did forty-two portraits, six across and seven down, of the opposition: labor organizers, priests, socialists, communists, student radicals, women activists. Four years later, following the trip to Montevideo, he enlarged the images and did the *Wall of Portraits*, individual monotypes in blacks and shades of brown and ochre, each 30 by 20 inches. These portraits remind us of the photographs families in countries such as Uruguay and Argentina

tack to outdoor walls in their attempt to locate their missing relatives. Like those impromptu posters, the faces are often difficult to read, as if a fragment of a small snapshot had been blown up to excessive proportions. But to Frascóni they cannot be large enough—as he mounts these images, one above another, on large exhibition walls. The sheer quantity of faces makes for an overwhelming monumentality. Stencilled along the top and bottom borders are their names:

María Rosa Selvería Gramont
 Yolanda Casco de D'ella
 Raul Borelli Cattaneo
 Hector Giordano
 Jesús Concua
 Gloria Amparo
 Rafael Lezama
 Andrés H. Bellizzi
 José Luis Urtasum Terra
 Father Conrado de la Cruz
 Ary Severo Barreto
 Ignacio Arocena Linn
 Juan Alberto de León
 Florencia Chávez
 Gustavo A. Goycochea
 Juvelino Andrés Carneiro Da Fortoura
 Carlos Severo Barreto
 Jorge H. Martínez Hermínguez
 María Asunción Artigas Nilo de Moyano
 Elsa Fernández de Sanz
 Carlos Cabezudo Pérez
 Aida Sanz Fernández
 Ismael Hernandez
 F. Díaz de Cardenas
 Marta Severo Barreto de Martínez
 No name (portrait of a man)
 Julio Castro
 Raul Gambaro Nuñez

The litany of names and the faces of these "missing" people live on for us in these haunting images.

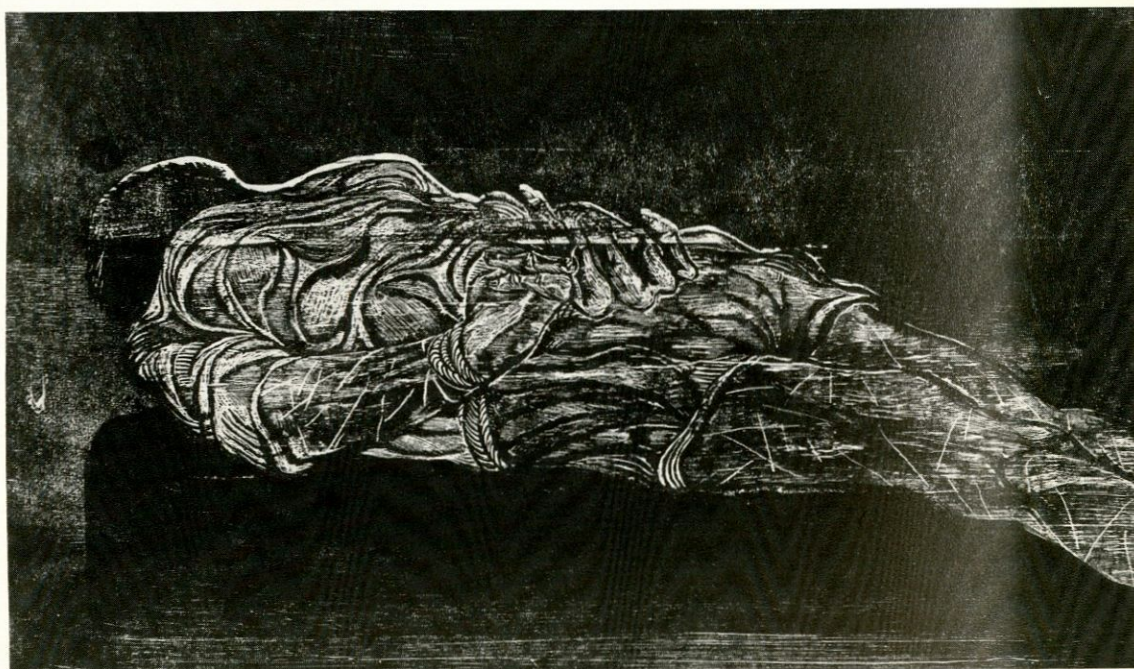
When art merges so seamlessly with unofficial history—with the popular will and a people's memory—we can be reassured that art still has the power to do more than encourage endurance. Frascóni does not consider the series to be finished, although a chapter may be. Having finished the *Charnel Houses* and *The Cells*, Frascóni awaits more reports. After all, the "disappearances," the clandestine interrogations, the tortures, the deaths, have not ceased in many of the countries of Latin America. We might ask, finally, why? Why the need for such governments to maintain such tight and elite control and to repress movements toward egalitarian democracy so vigorously? The answers may lie beyond the perimeters of art, but Frascóni has brought the questions into focus through these images that we dare not forget.

Patricia Hills
 Professor of Art History
 Boston University

1. *Uruguay: An Amnesty International Briefing*. London: Amnesty International Publications, 1983, pp. 1-2. I want to thank the Cambridge office of Amnesty International for providing me with numerous publications regarding the situation in Uruguay. I am also grateful to Antonio Frasconi for discussing this art with me.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

3. From a flyer distributed during Frasconi's exhibition held at the Terry Dintenfass Gallery in September, 1988. The text of this flyer was included in the exhibition held at the Boston University Art Gallery later that fall.



Los Desaparecidos V, 1981
woodcut
24 x 32

Checklist of the Exhibition

Dimensions are in inches. Height precedes width.

PRINTS

1. *Self-Portrait*, 1950
woodcut
21 7/8 x 6 3/4
2. *The Storm is Coming*, 1950
color woodcut
22 x 15 1/2
3. *Portrait of Dr. Albert Einstein*, 1952
woodcut
12 3/8 x 9 1/2
4. *Lettuce Worker I, Salinas Valley*, 1953
color woodcut
20 x 11 1/2
5. *Lettuce Worker II, Salinas Valley*, 1953
color woodcut
20 x 11 1/2
6. *Lettuce Worker III, Salinas Valley*, 1953
color woodcut
20 x 11 1/2
7. *Lettuce Worker IV, Salinas Valley*, 1953
color woodcut
20 x 11 1/2
8. *Lettuce Worker V, Salinas Valley*, 1953
color woodcut
20 x 11 1/2
9. *Portrait of Sean O'Casey*, 1956
woodcut
22 7/8 x 9 3/4
10. *Portrait of Dylan Thomas*, 1958
woodcut
30 x 14 5/8
11. *Excerpt from Preface to "Leaves of Grass"*, 1959
diptych, color woodcuts
22 x 15 each
12. *Frederico García Lorca: Oda a Walt Whitman*, 1959
diptych, color woodcuts
19 1/4 x 14 each
13. *Migration VI*, 1959
color woodcut
19 1/4 x 34 1/4
14. *Sanctuary*, 1959
color woodcut
19 1/4 x 33 7/16
15. *The Raven I*, 1959
color woodcut
28 x 20
16. *Homage to Francisco Sabater*, 1960
color woodcut
34 1/2 x 17 3/4
17. *Wall II*, 1962
color woodcut
30 x 23 3/4
18. *Muro VI*, 1963
color woodcut
36 x 23 3/4
19. *Nails*, 1963
color woodcut
18 x 23 3/4
20. *Spanish Souvenir*, 1963
color woodcut
36 x 24
21. *Wall IV*, 1963
color woodcut
22 x 30
22. *The Hawks VI*, 1966
color woodcut
34 7/8 x 23 1/4
23. *The Hawks VII*, 1966
color woodcut
34 7/8 x 23 1/4
24. *The Hawks VIII*, 1966
color woodcut
29 5/8 x 23
25. *The Involvement II*, 1967
color woodcut and photo engraving
24 1/2 x 19 3/4
26. *The Involvement III*, 1967
color woodcut and photo engraving
33 7/8 x 21 3/4
27. *Window II*, 1968
color woodcut
33 7/8 x 21 7/8
28. *Portrait of Kiowa Chief*, 1970
color woodcut
34 x 24

29. *Portrait of Sioux Chief Sitting Bull*, 1970
color woodcut
36 x 24
30. *Law & Order - Attica*, 1971
woodcut
16 3/4 x 24 3/4
31. *Law & Order - George Jackson*, 1971
woodcut
16 x 24 3/4
32. *Law & Order - Kent*, 1971
woodcut
16 x 24 3/4
33. *Portrait of Woody Guthrie*, 1972
woodcut
23 1/2 x 39
34. *Portrait of Huddie Ledbetter*, 1973
woodcut
23 1/2 x 38 1/2
35. *Portrait of Charles Mingus*, 1973
woodcut
25 x 33 1/2
36. *Portrait of Pablo Neruda*, 1973
color woodcut
36 x 24
37. *Portrait of Bix Beiderbecke*, 1976
woodcut
39 x 24
38. *Portrait of Paul Robeson at Peekskill*, 1976
woodcut
39 3/4 x 24
39. *The 42nd Parallel I*, 1978
woodcut and photo engraving
23 3/4 x 17 3/4
40. *The 42nd Parallel IV*, 1978
woodcut and photo engraving
23 3/4 x 17 3/4
41. *The 42nd Parallel V*, 1978
woodcut and photo engraving
23 3/4 x 17 3/4
42. *The 42nd Parallel VI*, 1978
woodcut and photo engraving
23 3/4 x 17 3/4
43. *Los Desaparecidos IV*, 1981
woodcut
39 1/2 x 27 1/2
44. *Los Desaparecidos V*, 1981
woodcut
24 x 32
45. *Más de 120,000 Desaparecidos*, 1983
woodcut
39 x 23 1/4
46. *The Interrogation*, 1984
woodcut
21 x 30
47. *Los Desaparecidos VI*, (*Los Encapuchados*), 1986
woodcut
24 x 36
48. *Los Desaparecidos VIII*, (*Los Encapuchados*), 1986
woodcut
24 x 36
49. *Los Desaparecidos X (Cells II)*, 1987
woodcut
29 1/2 x 40
- 50 - 78. *Portraits of Los Desaparecidos*, 1984 to 1989
series of 28 monotypes
30 x 20 each

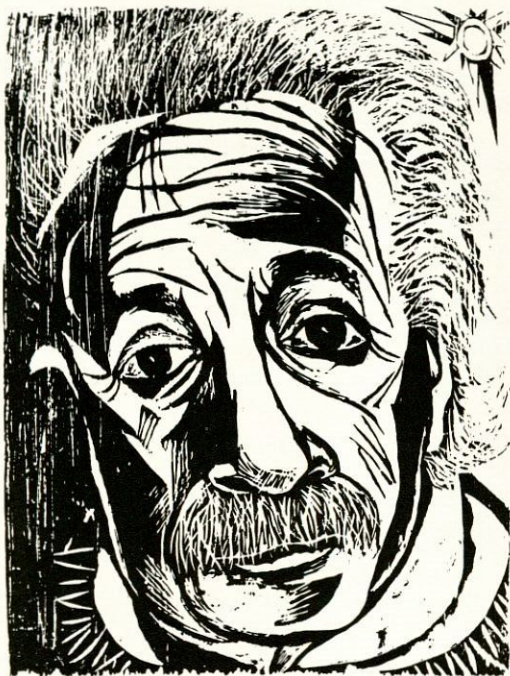
PORTFOLIOS

79. *Wetlands - South Norwalk I, III, V*, 1978-81
unbound portfolio
5 color woodcuts (three are included in the exhibit)
I, dyptych, 23 1/7 x 17 1/2 each; III, 22 1/2 x 30; V, 24 1/2 x 17 1/8
80. *The Seasons on the Sound*, 1975
unbound portfolio
9 color woodcuts and title page
26 1/4 x 22 1/2
81. *Das Lied vom SA-Mann*, 1961
Author: Bertolt Brecht
unbound portfolio
16 color woodcuts
20 x 13 3/4
82. *Viet Nam!*, 1967
bound portfolio
woodcuts
22 x 15
83. *Llanto por Ignacio Sanchez Mejias*, 1967
Author: Federico García Lorca
unbound portfolio
22 woodcuts
20 x 13 3/4
84. *Overhead the Sun: Lines from Walt Whitman*, 1969
Author: Walt Whitman
unbound portfolio
19 color woodcuts
14 x 10 1/4
85. *19 Poemas de Hispano America*, 1969
unbound portfolio
42 woodcuts
13 1/4 x 10 3/4
86. *Fourteen Americans*, 1974
bound portfolio
16 color woodcuts
22 1/2 x 15 1/4
87. *Los Desaparecidos*, 1984
unbound portfolio
25 woodcuts and color Xerox transfers
22 1/2 x 15 1/4

ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

88. *12 Fables of Aesop*, 1954
limited edition published by the Museum of Modern Art, New York
linoleum cuts
8 1/2 x 6 1/8
89. *The Face of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1959
limited edition printed by Igal Roodenko and James Lanier, New York
woodcuts
7 5/8 x 5 1/2
90. *A Whitman Portrait*, 1960
limited edition printed by Spiral Press, New York
woodcuts
7 1/2 x 5 1/2
91. *The Snow and the Sun/La Nieve y el Sol*, 1961
trade edition, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York
10 1/2 x 8 1/2
92. *A Sunday in Monterey*, 1964
trade edition (accordion format), Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York
5 1/2 x 126
93. *Bestiary/Bestario*, 1965
trade edition, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York
11 1/2 x 8 1/2
94. *A Vision of Thoreau, With His 1849 Essay Civil Disobedience*, 1965
limited edition printed by Spiral Press, New York
woodcuts
7 1/2 x 5 1/2

Portrait of Dr. Albert Einstein, 1952
woodcut
12 3/8 x 9 1/2

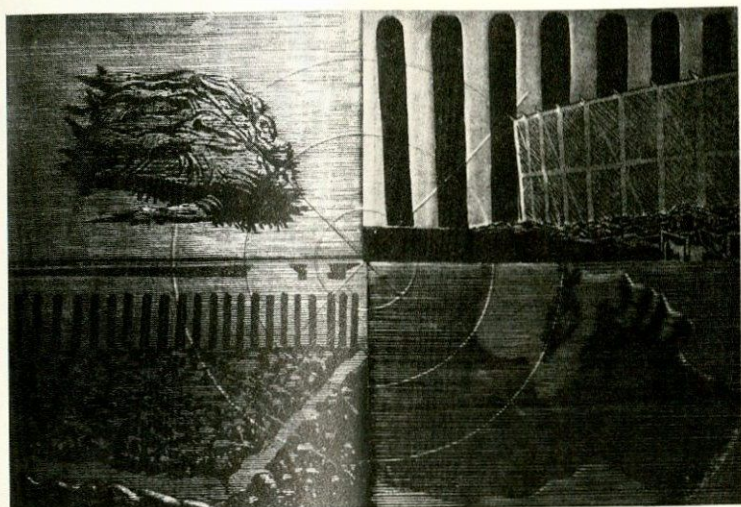


Portrait of Kiowa Chief, 1970
color woodcut
34 x 24

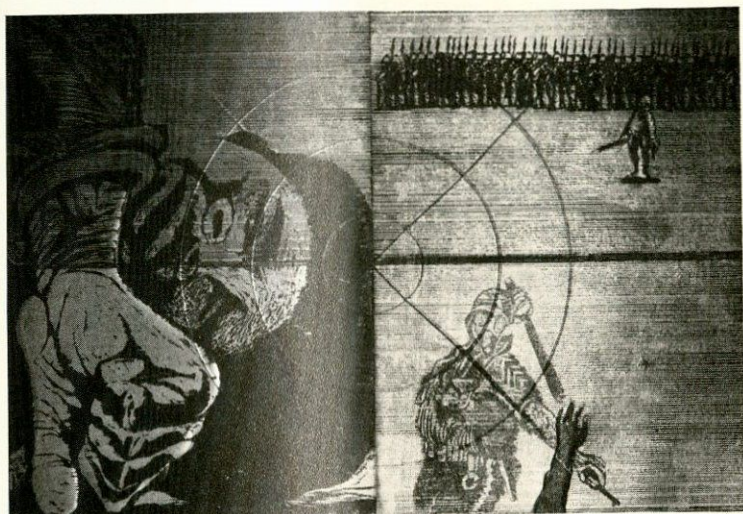


Portrait of Sioux Chief Sitting Bull, 1970
color woodcut
36 x 24

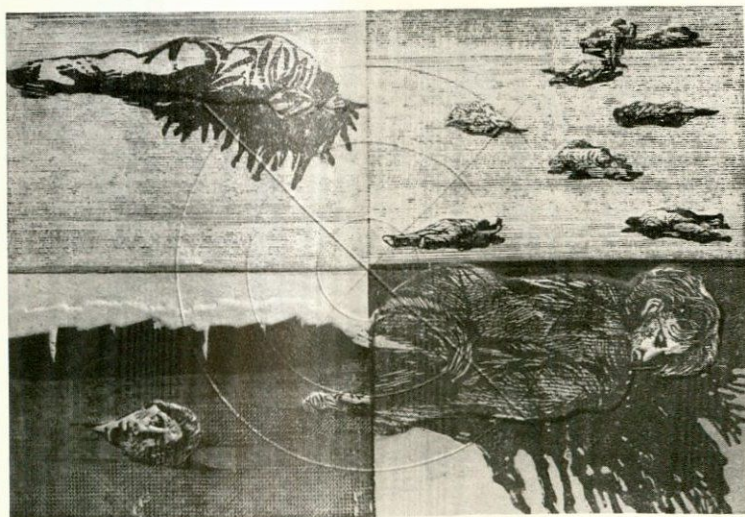




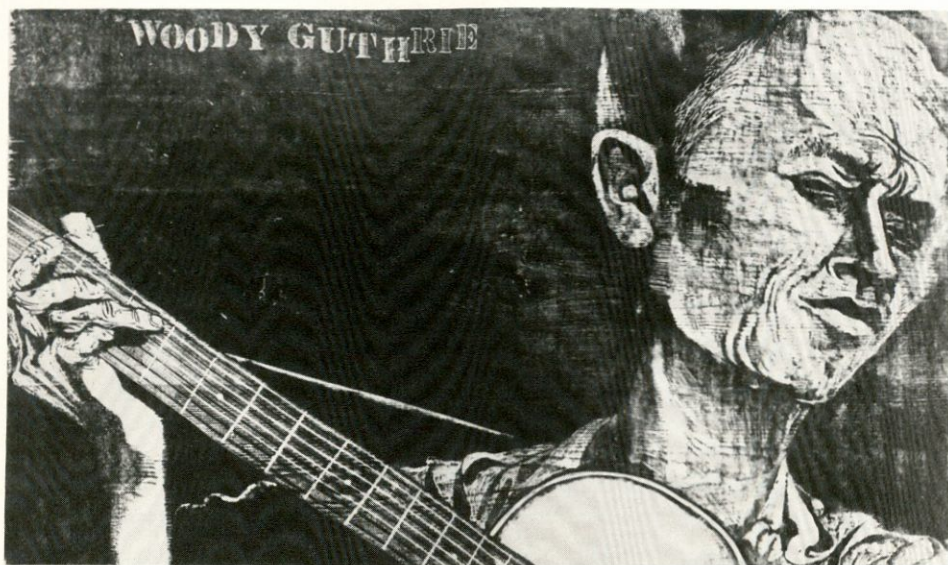
Law and Order - Attica, 1971
woodcut
16 3/4 x 24 3/4



Law and Order - George Jackson, 1971
woodcut
16 x 24 3/4



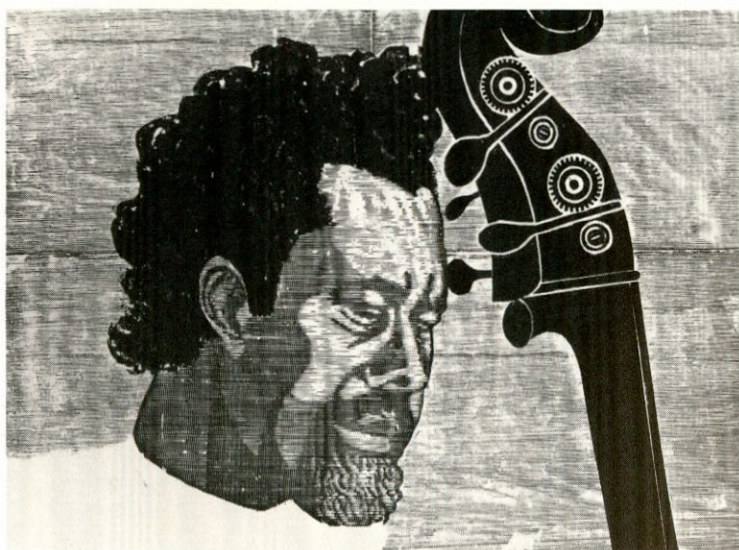
Law and Order - Kent, 1971
woodcut
16 x 24 3/4



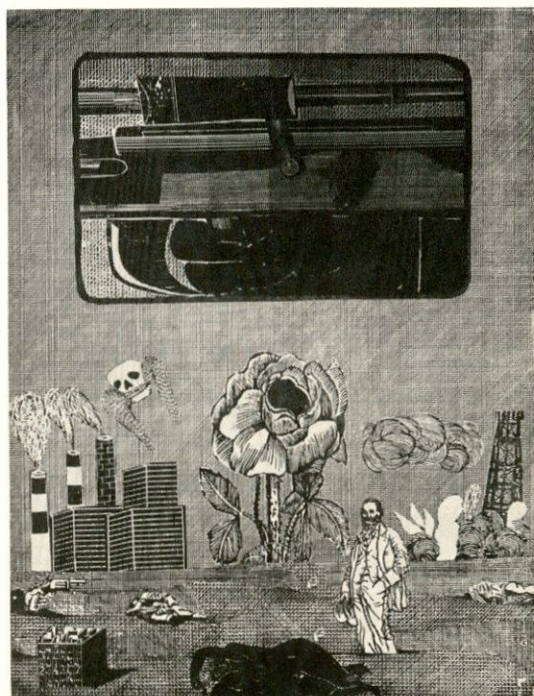
Portrait of Woody
Guthrie, 1972
woodcut
23 1/2 x 39



Portrait of Huddie
Ledbetter, 1973
woodcut
23 1/2 x 38 1/2



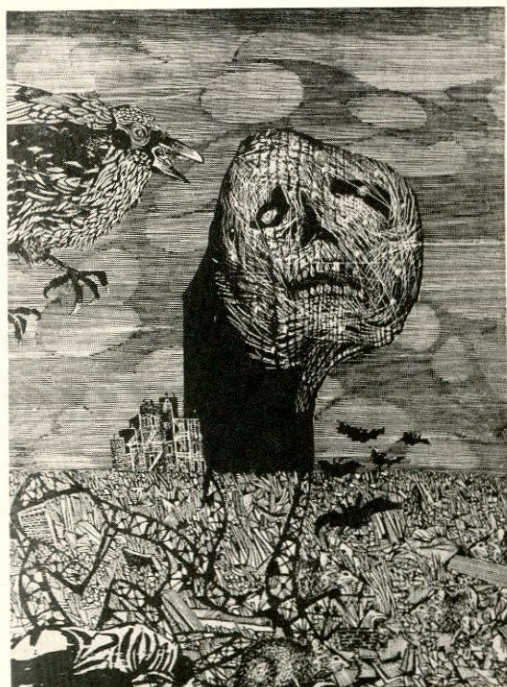
Portrait of Charles
Mingus, 1973
woodcut
25 x 33 1/2



The 42nd Parallel I, 1978
woodcut and photo engraving
23 3/4 x 17 3/4



The 42nd Parallel IV, 1978
woodcut and photo engraving
23 3/4 x 17 3/4



The 42nd Parallel V, 1978
woodcut and photo engraving
23 3/4 x 17 3/4

ANTONIO FRASCONI

Born 1919, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Education

- 1947 Architecture Academy, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1945 Art Students League, New York, NY
- 1936-7 Architecture Academy, Montevideo, Uruguay

Teaching

1979-present

- Professor, State University of New York College at Purchase, Purchase, NY
- 1985 Artist-in-Residence, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ
- 1984 Artist-in-Residence, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH
- 1977-79 Associate Professor, State University of New York College at Purchase
- 1973-77 Adjunct Associate Professor, State University of New York College at Purchase

Awards

- 1989 1989 Annual Children's Literature Author & Artist Award, Children's Literature Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- 1987 State of Connecticut Citation, Legislature of the State of Connecticut
- 1986 State University of New York Distinguished Teaching Professor Award, State University of New York, Albany, NY
- 1985 de L. Meissner Prize, National Academy of Design, 160th Annual Exhibition, New York, NY
- 1984 Award, I Bienal de La Habana-Comision Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, Havana, Cuba
- 1983 Ralph Fabri Prize, National Academy of Design, 158th Annual Exhibition, New York, NY
- Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, State University of New York, Albany, NY
- 1979 The Cannon Prize, National Academy of Design, 154th Annual Exhibition, New York, NY

- 1978 Grant, the Xerox Corporation, "Experimentation with the Xerox Color Copier"
- 1974 Grant, Connecticut Commission on the Arts, Hartford, CT
- 1969 National Academician of the National Academy of Design, New York, NY
- 1968 Award, *Gran Premio*, Exposicion de la Habana, Havana, Cuba
- 1967 Salon Nacional de Bellas Artes, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1966 Award, Le Prix du President du Comite National de la Region de la Moravie, 2e Biennale d'Art Graphique, Brno, Czechoslovakia
- 1963 Winner of Science Commemorative Stamp Competition
- The Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation Prize, the Society of American Graphic Artists, New York, NY
- 1960 Winner of Grand Prix at the 1960 Venice International Film Festival for *The Neighboring Shore*, Venice, Italy
- 1954 Grant, National Institute of Arts and Letters
- 1952 & 53 Inter-American Fellowship
- 1945 Art Students League Scholarship

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 1989 *Antonio Frasconi*, University of Iowa Museum, Iowa City, IO
- 1988 *Charnel Houses and Other Works*, Terry Dintenfass Gallery, New York, NY
- 1987-88 *Involvement: The Graphic Art of Antonio Frasconi* organized and circulated by the Wight Art Gallery, U.C.L.A.
- 1985 *Books & Posters of Antonio Frasconi*, the State University of New York at Old Westbury, Old Westbury, NY
- 1984 *Woodcut & Illustrated Books*, Baker Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH
- 1983 *Recent Work*, Terry Dintenfass Gallery, New York, NY
- 1982 The Neuberger Museum, State University of New York College at Purchase, Purchase, NY
- 1979 *Recent Work*, Terry Dintenfass Gallery, New York, NY
- 1977 *Recent Works*, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA

- Zoller Gallery, Pennsylvania State College, University Park, PA
- The Neuberger Museum, State University of New York College at Purchase, Purchase, NY
- 1976 *The Posters of Antonio Frasconi*, The American Institute of Graphic Arts, New York, NY
- Austin Art Center, Trinity College, Hartford, CT
- Retrospective Exhibition of Illustrated Books 1961-1976*, Museo del Libro, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- Obra Grafica de Antonio Frasconi, 1950-1975*, Grabado, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- Retrospective Exhibition: 1943-1975*, Jane Haslem Gallery, Washington, D.C.
- Woodcuts by Antonio Frasconi, 1950-1975*, circulated by the Missouri State Council of the Arts, St. Louis, MO
- 1975 *Recent Work*, Esther Bear Gallery, Santa Barbara, CA
- 1967 *The Woodcuts of Antonio Frasconi*, Galleri Penelope, Rome, Italy
- DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA
- 1966 Hunter Gallery, Aspen, CO
- 1963 *Retrospective*, The Baltimore Museum, Baltimore, MD
- Portfolio — Song of a Stormtrooper*, Terry Dintenfass Gallery, New York, NY
- 1953-54 Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.
- 1944 *Antonio Frasconi: Exposicion Grabados y Monotipias*, A.I.A.P.E., Montevideo, Uruguay
- 196 *Fiera del Libro*, Bologna, Italy
- A Lorca*, University of Puerto Rico Museum, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- 1985 *48th Annual Exhibit, Society of Wood Engravers*, Bristol, England
- 1983 *Portraits on a Human Scale*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
- Prints from Blocks: Gauguin to Now*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
- Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, The River and the Bridge*, Museum of the Borough of Brooklyn, Brooklyn, NY
- 1982 *Block Prints*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
- 1978 *Art and the Automobile*, Flint Art Institute, Flint, MI
- 1976 AAA Galleries, New York, NY
- The American Flag in the Art of Our Country*, Allentown, PA
- 1975 *Calligraphy Show*, Peninsula Public Library, Lawrence, NY
- Institute of Contemporary Hispanic Art, New York, NY
- 1974 *South American Printmakers*, Eye for Art, Princeton, NJ
- 1971 John Golden Gallery, Woodmere, NY
- 1968 *Venice Biennale* (Representative for Uruguay), Venice, Italy
- 1967 *Third Biennial Print Invitational Exhibition*, Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, CA
- Annual Exhibition*, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA
- 1966 *Whitney Annual*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1988 *Committed to Print*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
- 1986 2nd Bienal Lationamericana de Artes Graficas, Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Arts, New York, NY
- Art, Design and the Modern Corporation*, The Collection of the Container Corporation, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.
- Safe Life on Earth*, organized by Safe Life on Earth, Cambridge, MA
- Xylon 9 International Triennial Exhibition of Woodcuts*, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Bologna, Italy

Published Works

- 1986 Oquendo de Amat, Carlos. *Five Meters of Poems*. Isla Vista: Turkey Press.
- Soseki, Muso. *Sun at Midnight*. Translated by W.S. Merwin. New York: Nadja.
- 1985 Calvino, Italo. *Prima che tu dica*. Cottondale: Plain Wrapper Press, University of Alabama.
- Livingston, Myra Cohn. *Monkey Puzzle and Other Poems*. New York: Atheneum.
- 1983 Singer, Isaac Bashevis. *Yentl the Yeshiva Boy*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- 1982 de Vinne, Theodore Low. *Aldus Manutius*,

- The First Editor*. New York: Targ Limited Editions.
- Rodereda, Merce. *The Salamander*. New York: The Red Ozier Press.
- 1979 Farmer, Penelope, ed. *Beginnings—Creation Myths of the World*. New York: Atheneum.
- 1978 Farber, Norma. *How the Left Behind Beasts Built Ararat*. New York: Walker.
- 1975 Livingston, Myra Cohn, ed. *One Little Room, an Everywhere*. New York: Atheneum.
- 1974 Antonio Frasconi's *World*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, Inc.
- 1971 Melville, Herman. *On the Slain Collegians*. Edited by Antonio Frasconi. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Mistral, Gabriela. *Crickets and Frogs/Grillos y ranas*. New York: Atheneum
- Mistral, Gabriela. *The Elephant and His Secret*. New York: Atheneum.
- 1970 Mistral, Gabriela. *Selected Poems of Gabriela Mistral*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press for the Library of Congress
- 1969 Benedetti, Mario, ed. *Unstill Life/Naturaleza Viva*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Vedute di Venezia*. New York: Spiral Press.
- Whitman, Walt. *Overhead the Sun*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- 1968 *Kaleidoscope in Woodcuts*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- 1965 Krauss, Ruth. *The Cantilever Rainbow*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Love Lyrics*. New York: Odyssey Press.
- Neruda, Pablo. *Bestiary/Bestario*. Translated by Elsa Neuberger. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Thoreau, Henry David. *A Vision of Thoreau*. New York: Spiral Press.
- 1964 *A Sunday in Monterey*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. *Dreamtigers*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Known Fables*. New York: Spiral Press.
- See Again, Say Again*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- 1961 Brecht, Berthold. *Das Lied vom SA-Mann (Song of the Stormtrooper)*. New York: Spiral Press.
- The Snow and the Sun*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- 1960 *A Whitman Portrait*. New York: Spiral Press.
- The Neighboring Shore*, a 15 minute film, using over 100 woodcut images by Frasconi with poems by Walt Whitman.
- 1959 *The Face of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Igal Roodenko and James Lanier.
- 1958 *Birds from My Homeland*. New York: Igal Roodenko.
- The House That Jack Built*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- 1957 *Woodcuts 1957*. Comments by Antonio Frasconi. Joseph Blumenthal and Paul Bennett. New York: Spiral Press.
- 1956 *An Old Czech Carol*. New York: Murray Printers.
- 1955 *See and Say*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- 1954 *Twelve Fables of Aesop*. New York: Museum of Modern Art.
- 1953 Garcia Lorca, Federico. *2 poemas de Federico Garcia Lorca: Romance de la luna, luna; Romance de la Guardia Civil Espana*.

Public Collections

Art Council of Great Britain, London, England
 Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
 Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD
 Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, France
 Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
 Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, PA
 Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH
 Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
 Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH
 Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, MI
 Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
 J. B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY
 Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NB
 Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
 Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, NY
 Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Montevideo, Uruguay
 Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI
 Museum of Art, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
 Newark Museum, Newark, NJ
 Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA

Portrait of Bix Beiderbecke, 1976
woodcut
39 x 24

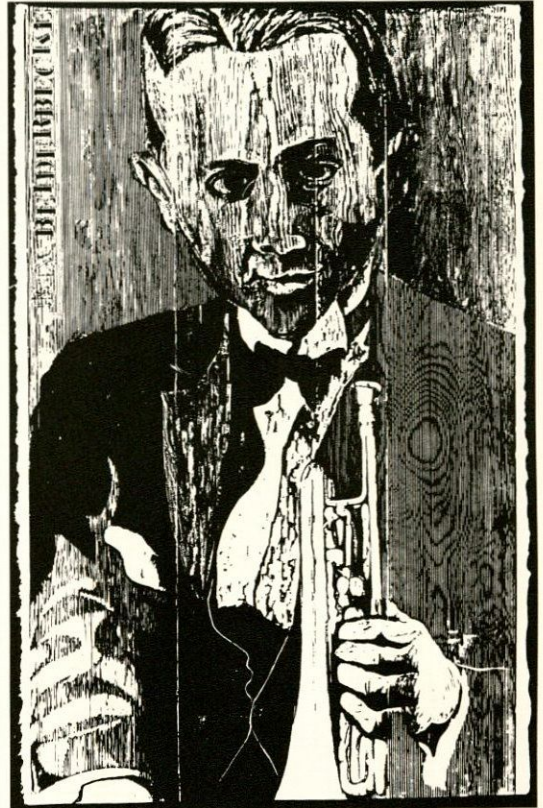
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA
Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA
The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ
The Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Wight Art Gallery, U.C.L.A., Los Angeles, CA
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
The New York Public Library, Prints Division, New York, NY
University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, CA
University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT

Documentary Films

- 1986 *Two Films About Antonio Frasconi*. Donnel Library Center. New York.
1985 *The Woodcuts of Antonio Frasconi*, a 25 minute film by Pablo Frasconi, distributed by the American Federation of Art, New York.
1975 *Antonio Frasconi, Graphic Artist*, a 20 minute film by Pablo Frasconi.

Selected Bibliography

- Gasser, Manuel. "Antonio Frasconi," *Graphis*. Vol. 23, no. 134 (1967): 500-15.
Getlein, Frank. "Frasconi the Printmaker," *The New Republic*. Vol. 150, no. 9 (1964): 28-49.
Heller, James. "The Exuberant World of Antonio Frasconi," *Impression*. (December, 1957): 8-16.
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From Wood to Paper: The Woodcut Printing Process

Frederick A. Zimmerman

We are all familiar with the postmark, signature stamp, and the elementary school potato print—just a few illustrations of the relief printing process. Relief printing is the most ancient of the printmaking processes, and the first printed letters, the first printed illustrations, and even the first printed playing cards were produced by this process. Relief methods are simple, direct, and relatively inexpensive. The necessary materials are a block, cutting tools, ink, paper, and a tablespoon or other burnisher. The traditional block is made of wood (pine, poplar, beech, bass, cherry, etc.), however, today materials such as masonite, linoleum, plywoods, and even metal are sometimes used. The printing process is the same regardless of the material used for the block.

Black and white woodcuts, the most popular type of relief print, are made using a plank-grain block of wood. The composition is drawn on the surface of the wooden block and the background cut away with knives and gouges, leaving the composition raised above the background. Black ink is applied to this surface with a brayer (a rubber roller) and the ink transfers from the brayer to the raised surface of the composition. Paper is then laid over the inked surface and the back of the paper rubbed with a spoon or other burnisher to transfer the ink from the wood surface to the paper. The final result is a reversed image of the composition in black against the white background of the paper.

This process is then repeated until the desired number of identical prints of the composition have been made ("pulled"), at which point the printing block is defaced or destroyed so that no more prints of that composition can be printed. The total number of prints of a composition is called an *edition*, and there may be as few as ten or as many as a hundred prints in a woodcut edition. The size of the edition effects the cost of the print, and between two prints more-or-less equal in size and quality,

the print with an edition of twenty-five will be significantly more expensive than the print with an edition of a hundred. Most twentieth century prints have this information written in pencil below the composition. Either beneath the left corner or beneath the center will appear a set of identifying numbers, for example, 12/25. The larger number records the number of the edition, and the smaller number indicates the position of that particular print in the process of printing, i.e., the twelfth print in an edition of twenty-five. Some prints will have the letter A/P (Artist's Proof), or simply the word Proof in place of the print and edition number. These prints differ slightly from the prints in their edition because they are printed before the block has been completely cut. Such prints give the artist a chance to see the print at that point in its development (remember, the print will be the reverse image of the block being developed), and to decide whether it needs more work or is actually finished. Also, proofs are pulled for the sake of determining how the block should be inked. Economically, "artist's proofs" tend to be more expensive than the prints of the edition. The title of the composition, if there is one, will also be written in pencil beneath the composition, and the artist's signature should appear towards the right corner. The signature is particularly important as a guarantee that the entire process has been completed by the artist or under his or her personal supervision. Without the signature, the economic value of the print is drastically reduced.

The development and printing of a multiple colored woodcut print differs from black and white woodcut methods only insofar as each color is usually cut and printed from a sepa-

rate block. The artist prints the colors in sequence from light colors to dark, and allows each color to dry before the next color is printed on the same sheet of paper. There are many possible variations from this one color-one block approach, and Antonio Frasconi has used them all. It is possible, for example, to ink a single block with two or more colors if the areas of each are adequately separated; or to graduate the density of a color either during the application of the ink or by wiping portions of the surface after the ink has been laid on. It is even possible to ink a brayer with two different colors before transfer to the wood surface. The creation of a uniform edition of a color woodcut is a time consuming process which demands meticulous planning.

The use of battleship linoleum in place of wooden block has become a popular method of introducing relief printing to secondary school students. The linoleum is a relatively soft material with no grain and is easily cut, inked, and printed. The resulting linocut, as such prints are called, yields a flat, sharp edged composition but without the richness of surface variation of the woodcut. For this reason, professional relief printers may use linoleum to print background colors which support a narrative woodcut block, but rarely will they use linoleum to produce a major composition.

Wood engraving differs from woodcuts in everything but the inking and printing of the block. The wood engraving block is made of end-grain hardwood approaching the hardness of copper, and is small in size. The composition is cut into the surface with specialized tools, called *burins*, which create a variety of fine lines. In a woodcut block, everything is cut away from the composition itself; in a

wood engraving, the composition itself is cut and the surrounding surface is untouched. When the wood engraving block is inked, the composition, which has been cut into or below the surface, remains uninked. The resulting print will consequently appear as white lines on a black background, the opposite of a woodcut print which appears as black lines on a white background. Despite the fact that wood engravings can yield extremely large editions, the number of wood engravings being produced today is minimal. The engraving process is very intricate and time consuming, and the composition restricted to small size. Antonio Frasconi has little involvement with engravings, but he has recognized the intrinsic power of the white line on black ground image and has successfully incorporated its strength into the larger format of the woodcut print. This is clearly seen in *Law and Order—Kent*, and in the technically masterful color print *The Storm is Coming* where the narrative line shifts back and forth from light line on dark ground to dark line on light ground.

The distinctive characteristics which identify the traditional woodcut from other printmaking processes are the unique marks of the various gouges and knives used in cutting the block, the unexpected ink marks in background areas caused by the brayer accidentally inking ridges not cut deeply enough, and the potentially visible wood-grain pattern caused by the manner in which the wood surface absorbs some of the ink. Woods with dark and light grain vary in density, the darker portions being significantly harder than the lighter portions. This means that the lighter portions of the grain absorb more ink than the darker so that the grain pattern itself is transferred to the print. *Portrait of Woodie Guthrie* is a definitive

illustration of all these characteristics, but the utilization of the wood-grain to delineate Guthrie's facial expression is a testament to the artistic genius of Frasconi and his total mastery of the medium.

Antonio Frasconi has been recognized as one of the great masters and innovators in relief printmaking for over forty years. He has continually experimented with tools and surfaces, cutting blocks with tools ranging from the traditional to the contemporary flexible shaft power routers, attacking surfaces with anything capable of making an impression. His use of the unworked surface, particularly weathered and knotted wood-grain as background enrichment, has become a trademark of the Frasconi color woodcut (e.g., *Oil and Tilled Land*). Almost any textured surface can be printed by relief methods, for the brayer transfers ink only to the raised portions of a surface, which, in turn, will transfer to the printing paper. Coarsely woven cloth, wire screening, barn siding, any variegated surface that catches the artist's eye, may be incorporated into the composition. Surfaces and textures can be created, as well as found, by gluing materials to a flat surface. The possibilities of experimental surfaces in relief printing are limited only by the artist's imagination and, for Antonio Frasconi, this means no limitations at all.

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A retrospective exhibition of the artist's works from the 1950s through the present including woodcuts and other prints, portfolios and illustrated books

