

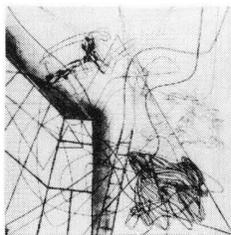
Counterpoint and Color: Prints by S.W. Hayter



**Western Gallery and Department of Art
College of Fine and Performing Arts
Western Washington University**

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COUNTERPOINT AND COLOR: PRINTS BY S.W. HAYTER



During the eighties Ann Friedman and Tom Johnston made several trips to Paris where they visited as well as worked in S. W. Hayter's studio. After Hayter's death in 1988, they approached the Western Gallery with a proposal to organize a survey of his prints.

Two of their primary goals were to focus on the late works and to highlight works from the artist's estate and west coast collections. Through Ann's background as an art historian and Tom's career as an artist and professor of art in the Department of Art, they were able to present this rich survey: the early drypoints of 1927, the year Hayter founded Atelier 17, Paris; black and white engravings of the thirties; many of the classic images of the New York years during World War II, including proofs and experiments in simultaneous color; and various themes spanning his involvement with the Surrealists and automatism to the return to the figure during his last decade. One of their rewarding experiences has been to work with Hayter's widow, Désirée Hayter, who has made available from her personal collection half of the works in the exhibition. We are also grateful to the individuals in the Puget Sound region and California who have enriched museum collections and have offered their valuable assistance by addressing Tom's and Ann's inquiries, discussing Hayter's achievements, lending works and photographs and/or acting as envoys; Gala Chamberlin, Gordon and Vivian Gilkey, Evie and Dave Heaps, Misch and Lore Kohn, Louis Leithold, Daniel Lienau, Gary Lundell, Jean Russell and Wesley Wehr. The following institutions graciously opened their print drawers and photography files during their busy schedules: Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle; Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach; Portland Art Museum; Seattle Art Museum; and Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bellingham. Aware of the costs of preparation, Daniel Smith, Inc. and Dakota Art Store, both of Seattle, have issued the Western Gallery small material grants. Finally, without the financial assistance of the Department of Art, this brochure would not have been printed. The faculty of the Department of Art salute Ann's and Tom's dedication in curating this exhibition.

Director: Sarah Clark-Langager

Guest Curators: Ann Friedman
Tom Johnston

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Stanley William Hayter was passionate about the art of printmaking. He valued printmaking for its expressive qualities and its potential for original creations, rather than for its reproductive capacities. Through his art, his writing, and the workshop that he founded, Atelier 17, Hayter encouraged others to discover printmaking as original expression and view prints with an eye for their unique physical properties. In the collaborative atmosphere of Atelier 17, artists were inspired to experiment with techniques and broaden the scope of printmaking. Much has been written about Atelier 17, about how the workshop revived etching and engraving and explored innovative methods, and how its influence spread, contributing to the resurgence of interest in printmaking during this century.¹ However, this exhibition focuses on prints made by Hayter. These prints embody many of the discoveries associated with Atelier 17, but they can also be appreciated for their beauty and expression quite apart from the historical impact of Hayter's workshop.

Hayter's interests and knowledge extended far beyond the visual arts. He also loved music, and borrowed a musical term, counterpoint, to name a visual concept that he considered to be very important. In a broad sense, counterpoint can be understood as two distinct elements, which may seem to be opposed, brought together so that their combination creates a third element, not fully present in either one, and only possible as an integration of opposing forces. Hayter described the relationship between elements in counterpoint as "consequent but not always rational."² In Hayter's prints, the lines, shapes, textures, colors set against one another create further expressive possibilities, tensions, and ambiguities. Throughout his life and art, Hayter brought together elements that were often thought of as separate: art and science, conscious and unconscious, logic and intuition, technique and inspiration, line and three-dimensionality, color and intaglio prints. Hayter was one of many twentieth-century thinkers who demonstrated the arbitrariness of these divisions.

Art and Science, Artist and Teacher

Hayter was born in London in 1901. His father and other relatives were painters, and he started painting in his father's studio. However, in college he studied chemistry and geology, and afterward worked for Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in Iran for three years. Though he decided to concentrate solely on art when he returned to England and then moved to Paris, his scientific approach remained a constant, and is evident in his emphasis on research, experimentation, and careful analysis of results.

Paris in 1926 was a dynamic cultural center, and Hayter soon made friends with artists there. A Polish artist, Joseph Hecht, was using the technique of burin engraving to create original works rather than to copy already existing works, which was engraving's primary use at the time. Hayter learned the technique from him, and found it well-suited to his artistic aims. Soon, people came to Hayter to learn engraving, so he founded a workshop, which later came to be called Atelier 17. Hayter did not believe in teaching, but rather in creating a stimulating, collaborative environment where everyone learns. Many artists worked there, all participated in the creative search for new means of expression, sharing ideas and experimenting. In 1940, Hayter moved to New York City and established Atelier 17 there. Returning to Paris in 1950, he reopened the workshop. Hayter worked on his own prints and paintings and continued his involvement with the workshop until his death in 1988.

Intuition and Reason, Space and Time

Despite his scientific inclination, Hayter did not rely solely on logic and reason. Like the surrealists, with whom he associated and exhibited, Hayter believed that intuition and the subconscious were vital aspects of the whole person, as well as the wellsprings of artistic creation. Hayter wrote, "The source of the material in all my works is unconscious or automatic; that is to say, an image is made without deliberate intention or direction. The impulse to make an image is definite, but no particular image is sought consciously."³ In his burin engraving, Hayter achieved a remarkable freedom and fluidity, even though this technique requires the artist to push the sharp point of the burin through the resistant metal plate. For him, automatic drawing and engraving were ways to express the natural rhythms and movements of the body and psyche. Other people would respond to these images because everyone, through the collective unconscious, has access to these feelings.

Hayter's approach to a plate was almost like that of an explorer setting out to map an uncharted space. He conceived of a plate in three dimensional terms, being very aware of just how deep a burin line he was creating, and how the grooves he was cutting would print as lines slightly raised above the surface of the paper, the reverse of the action in the plate. To further enhance spatial possibilities, Hayter cut out hollows in the plate that would then print as white reliefs. Not only did Hayter consider the space his burin was moving through, but also the time involved in this movement. He distinguished "between the drawn line, which is not hidden by the draughtsman's hand, and is a visible record of the immediate past, and the engraved line, which is hidden by the hand which traces it on the plate, and explores the future."⁴ Hayter felt that a print could convey to a viewer the feeling of

movement that he experienced as he guided his burin through the plate.

Hayter's sensitivity to physical space and movement was coupled with an interest in the illusion of space that two-dimensional images often exploit. For Hayter, consistent, perspective space was not as fascinating as the ambiguities that he could create with line, texture, and color. He experimented with the way some lines appear to be in front of others, and some suggest concavity or convexity. When he began to use soft-ground etching to translate the textures of various materials into the plate, he worked with layering and the resulting spatial implications of seemingly transparent veils. Further variations were available through colors, with their appearance of advancing and receding. By using these elements in counterpoint, Hayter wanted to involve the viewer in the play of "the interference of textures, the web of space, the conflict or harmony between figured space and colour space, the ambiguity of convex/concave, tension, torsion, or flow."⁵

Color and Prints

Hayter was always painting as well as making prints, and it was inevitable that his love for color and joy in experimenting should lead to new ways of creating color prints. Hayter and other artists working in Atelier 17 conducted many experiments in printing color from intaglio plates, in particular searching for a way to print multiple colors simultaneously from one plate. To achieve this, they combined intaglio inking with inking the surface of the plate. Some of the methods they employed for surface inking were: applying ink through stencils or by silkscreen; offsetting ink from one surface onto a roller then onto the plate; charging the roller with more than one colored ink, creating bands of color and a subtle gradation between them. The technique for which the Atelier is best known is sometimes referred to as viscosity printing, though Hayter did not like this term and preferred to call it simultaneous color printing. In this process, different viscosities of ink and the varying hardness or softness of the rollers used to apply the ink, place colors according to different levels of relief in the plate.

In conjunction with his exploration into how to print multiple colors, Hayter experimented with what colors to use and to what expressive end. He stated that his purpose was "to communicate some matter of thought (opponent process, sequence, sign, signal, emotion, stimulus, field) by means of color."⁶ He conducted many experiments with color, trying "to see color unrelated to objects, as free as possible from likes and dislikes."⁷ He was able to freely use colors, while at the same time realizing that the colors he chose would have varying impacts on viewers. The expressive power of color can be seen by comparing two prints in

which wave patterns form the background for an abstracted figure or object. In *Plongeon* (Dive) 1974, the blues suggest that the figure has time for contemplation before plunging into the depths. But in *Chute* (Fall) 1975, the red, orange, and yellow inject a note of alarm, implying that the object is falling dangerously fast. Hayter often printed with fluorescent inks, as in *Expansion* (1970), where he created an imaginary realm of pure form and color. In prints such as *Vague de Fond* (Swell) 1965, and *Vortex*, 1968, Hayter worked with the "rhythm ... in the juxtaposition of elements of color of such form and proportion that the color space fluctuates and does not take up a stable position."⁸

Idea and Technique

In discussing art, a distinction is sometimes made between idea and technique, inspiration and execution. This is particularly the case in printmaking, for a variety of reasons, including the complexity of techniques and the indirect quality of the process, in that the artist does not make marks on the paper, but on an intermediate surface, a plate, stone, block, or screen. Additionally, printmaking has often been used to reproduce an image that was originally done in another medium, such as painting, rather than to create an image of original expression.

Hayter and other print artists reject the separation of technique and creative expression. Hayter wrote that "the interdependence of idea and technique is a condition without which idea is lost and technique is a sterile, mechanical operation."⁹ However, he also felt that technique could open up new modes of visual thinking, could actually suggest a direction that the artist did not consciously have in mind. He wrote, "A technique is an action in which the imagination of the user is excited, whereby an order of image otherwise latent becomes visible; and not merely a series of mechanical devices to produce or repeat a previously formulated image on paper."¹⁰ Throughout Hayter's approach to making art there is this interplay between what the artist already has in mind and what comes up during the process of creating. Rather than relying on an idea of how the finished print should look and rigidly sticking to that idea, Hayter was involved in a dialogue with the emerging image, finding new direction and inspiration with each successive state of a print.

To a certain extent, Hayter's work can be divided into general periods, and these periods reflect the integral relationship between idea and technique. When Hayter arrived in Paris he explored his new surroundings in his art, simultaneously developing his skills with drypoint and engraving. Many of his prints of the late 1920's depict street scenes and landscapes, and are somewhat traditional in the use of black lines on white paper to render naturalistically. These culminated in a

portfolio of six prints, *Paysages Urbains* (Urban Landscapes) 1930, that show Hayter's mastery of the medium and his growing interest in spatial ambiguities. By superimposing a landscape and a city scene, Hayter played with transparency and layering, major motifs in his later work.

Beginning in the 1930's, Hayter's works became less naturalistic as he worked with automatism and imagery from the subconscious. His searching burin created figurative forms, often in postures of torsion or distress. Using soft-ground etching for texture and value, Hayter suggested transparent forms in an undefined space, the space of the imagination as well as a universal place. Though the anguish of these figures is general and timeless, it is also particular to the period, a time of civil war in Spain and the rise of Hitler in Germany. Hayter's stance against war was expressed in prints, such as *Combat*, 1936. Two portfolios of prints were initiated by Hayter and published by Atelier 17, *Solidarité*, 1938, and *Fraternity*, 1939. These were sold to benefit the Spanish Republican Children's Fund.¹¹ Also during this period, Hayter delved into mythological themes, apparently as another way of trying to understand the political turmoil and senseless violence. *Laocoön*, 1943, evokes the agony of death through intensity of lines, diagonal thrusts, and dramatic contrasts of light and dark.

Hayter was one of many artists who relocated to the United States during World War II. The new situation and new stimuli were once again concurrent with new directions in his art. A large part of Hayter's experimental energy went into developing methods for printing color. Initial approaches, using stencils, silkscreen, and offset, resulted in flat areas of color, as seen in *Cinq Personnages* (Five Characters), 1946, and *L'Escoutay*, 1951.¹² These colors were similar in function to areas of soft-ground texture, adding more transparent layers and spatial movement. The increasing number of elements used in counterpoint resulted in more complex compositions.

The simultaneous color methods developed by Hayter and other artists at Atelier 17 culminated in the technique of creating plates with varying degrees of relief that retain different colored inks according to their viscosity and the rollers used. This method enabled the artist to achieve more complex and more subtle color shifts than were possible with stencils and offset. The first work that Hayter printed this way was *Poisson Rouge* (Goldfish) 1957. Through this technique, Hayter could more fully express his interest in water, its waves and patterns, movement and life. In conjunction with this way of printing, Hayter used a particular way of drawing on the plate that enhanced the aquatic feel. The ink from a felt-tipped pen called a Flowmaster resists acid when it is applied slowly and thickly, but breaks down under acid if it is applied more quickly and thinly. The line resisting the acid

would be white or the surface color when printed. The line that broke down would look like a charcoal line when printed. "Hence we had a means of drawing onto a plate a line which passed from white to black according to the speed of movement of the hand. The effect in the print was a line that appeared to pass through the plane of the surface, giving a sense of free movement through the third dimension."¹³ In *Poisson Rouge*, Hayter's lively, sweeping, gestural drawing captures the movement, bubbles, and watery depths of underwater life.

While the Flowmaster prints represent an emotional, visceral aspect of water, other works show a more analytical, cerebral rendering. In light of scientific theory, about which Hayter was extremely knowledgeable, waves also suggest wavelengths and scientific explanations of color and sound perception. In *Nautilus*, 1969, Hayter's free-flowing burin engraving of the shell contrasts with his more controlled approach to evoking water. For etching the water, Hayter used contact paper, called *venilia* in France, as the acid resist, cutting through it with a knife. "When cutting is complete, any parts to be bitten are lifted, exposing the metal. The cut itself etches as a fine line."¹⁴ Hayter also used these clean, controlled lines for *Calculus*, 1971. In a perfect fusing of his artistic and scientific propensities, Hayter incorporated algebraic curves into his visual vocabulary of flowing line and daring color. It is fitting that this image was reproduced on the cover of a mathematics textbook.¹⁵

These themes and techniques recur throughout Hayter's work. Musical themes are also important, as in the prints inspired by dances, *Pavane*, 1935, and *Tarantelle*, 1943, and by opera, *Il Commendatore*, 1980. In the 1980's, Hayter did several prints that depict objects, walls, and windows from his own studio. When these interiors include a male figure, that person can be assumed to represent Hayter. In some prints — *Pendu* (Hanged) 1983, *Constellation*, 1987, and his last print, *Downward*, 1988 — there is a softness of atmosphere and gradation of color that creates a calm, inward-looking mood, quite a different mood than that created by his oft-used fluorescent colors and startling color combinations. Such introspection by someone in his 80's is not unusual. But concurrently, Hayter was working with bright, adventurous color and youthful exuberance. His delight in art and life infused all his work, and he went far in communicating this joy to others.

Art and Spirit

Hayter did not believe in teaching, but he did believe in trying to help people understand art, especially the art of printmaking. Toward this end, he founded Atelier 17 and continued to devote time to it until the end of his life. He also wrote extensively about art in general and printmaking in particular, though he

thought that "the import of graphic statement is perceived by a different mechanism — more primitive perhaps, more direct and certainly less specific — from the logical syntax of word and phrase ... all words can do for us in such matters is to create the climate of understanding."¹⁶ Hayter's words go far in creating such a climate, and his art communicates powerfully on the non-verbal level.

Never one to shy away from difficult tasks, Hayter did try to put the art viewing experience into words:

In the contemplation of the exceptional print, which by chance is able to engage completely the spirit of the observer, he may be able to escape, as through the doorway in a dream, out of the banal conformism of our everyday banal existence into a fuller life of the spirit. All this may appear to the reader as pretentious nonsense; but such a reader is unlikely to have the absorption in image that we predicate.¹⁷

It is our belief that Hayter's prints are exceptional and able to engage the spirit of the viewer, and we hope that viewers of this exhibition will feel the absorption in image that is the ultimate art experience.

(1.) Among many publications, an exhibition catalog is of particular interest: Joann Moser, *Atelier 17: A 50th Anniversary Retrospective Exhibition* (Madison, Wisconsin: Elvehjem Art Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1977). (2.) Stanley William Hayter, *New Ways of Gravure*, 3rd ed. (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1981), 211. (3.) *Ibid.*, 132. (4.) Graham Reynolds, "Hayter: The Years of Surrealism," in *The Renaissance of Gravure: The Art of S.W. Hayter*, ed. P.M.S. Hacker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 11. (5.) Stanley William Hayter, *About Prints* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 129. (6.) Hayter, *New Ways of Gravure*, 140. (7.) *Ibid.*, 136. (8.) Stanley William Hayter, "Orientation, Direction, Chirality, Velocity and Rhythm," in *The Nature and Art of Motion*, ed. Georgy Kepes (New York: George Braziller, 1965), 78. (9.) Hayter, *New Ways of Gravure*, 5-6. See also Stanley William Hayter, "The Interdependence of Idea and Technique in Gravure," *Tiger's Eye* 1, no. 8 (June 15, 1949), 41-45. (10.) Hayter, *About Prints*, 94. (11.) *Solidarité* consists of a poem by Paul Éluard, translated by Brian Coffey, and seven prints, by Hayter, Picasso, Miró, Tanguy, Masson, Buckland-Wright, and Husband. *Fraternity* includes a poem by Stephen Spender, translated by Louis Aragon, and nine prints by Hayter, Kandinsky, Miró, Buckland-Wright, Husband, Hecht, Mead, Rieser, and Vargas. (12.) L'Escoutay is the name of a stream on Hayter's property in the Ardèche. See Hacker, *The Renaissance of Gravure: The Art of S.W. Hayter*, 86. (13.) Hayter, *New Ways of Gravure*, 102. (14.) *Ibid.* (15.) Hayter's print was reproduced on the cover of *Calculus*, written by Louis Leithold, published in 1972. (16.) Hayter, *About Prints*, 167. (17.) *Ibid.*, 116.

Front cover art: **Chute**, 1975

simultaneous color intaglio, trial proof, 23 1/2 x 19"

Inside art: **Hex**, 1981

engraving, II/XV, 19 1/2 x 19 1/2"

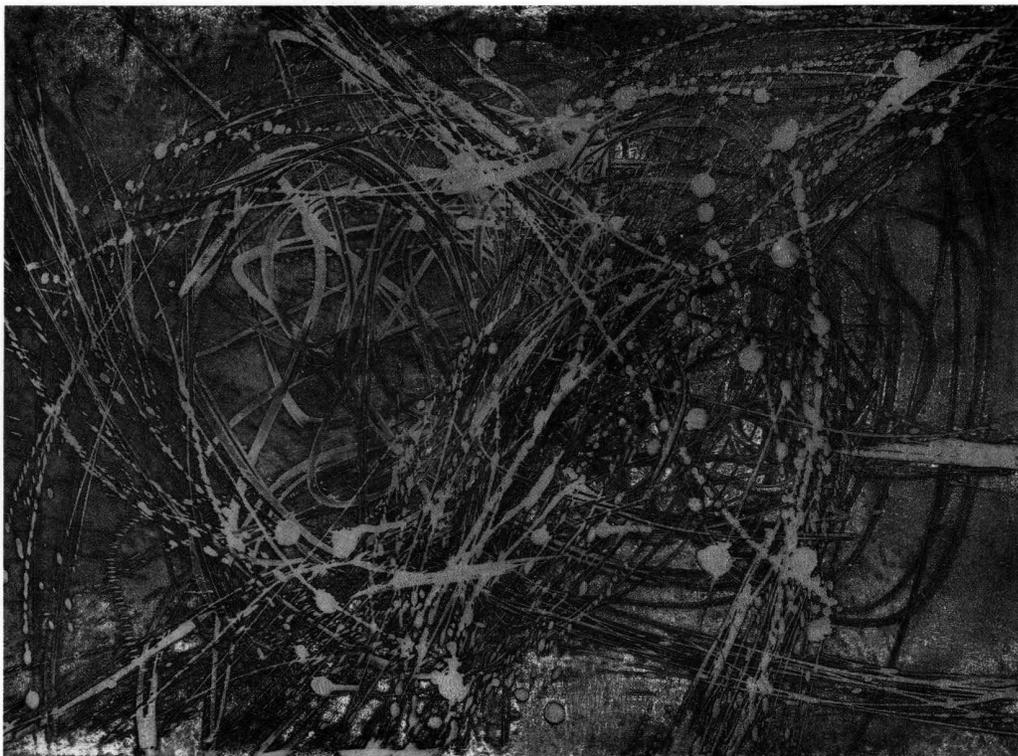
From the Collection of Désirée Hayter, Paris

Photos: TAJ

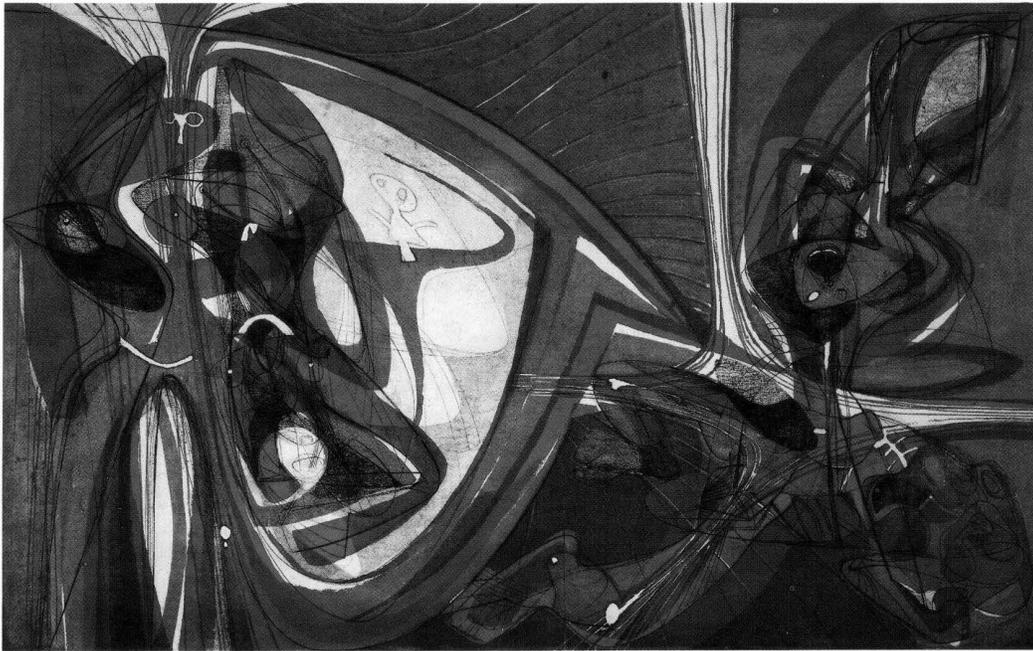
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Tropic of Cancer, 1949
intaglio, 15/50, 22 x 27 1/2"
Collection of Henry Art Gallery,
University of Washington, purchase
Photo by: Richard Nicol



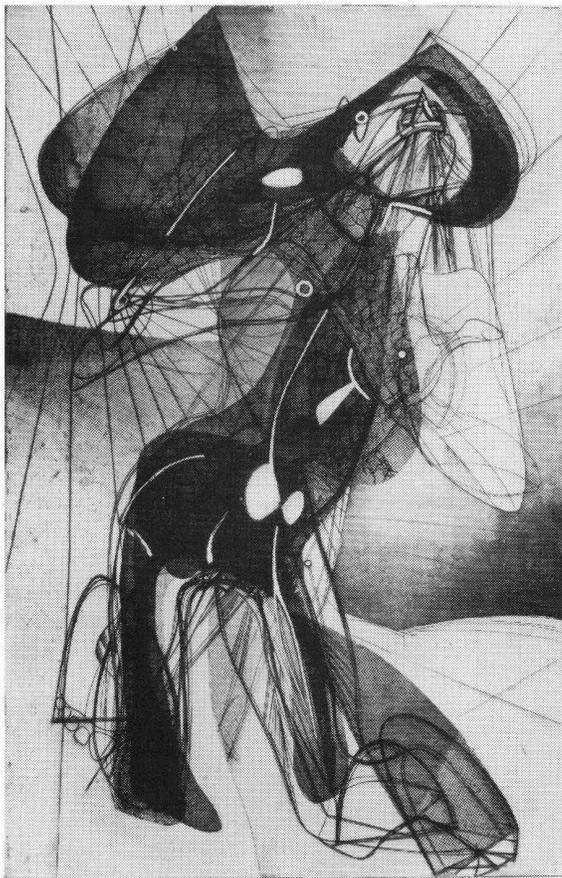
Poisson Rouge, 1957
simultaneous color intaglio, 4/50, 13 x 18"
Collection of Désirée Hayter, Paris
Photo: TAJ



Cinq Personnages, 1946

simultaneous color intaglio, 41/50, 15 1/2 x 24"

Collection of Louis Leithold, Courtesy of Tortue Gallery, Santa Monica

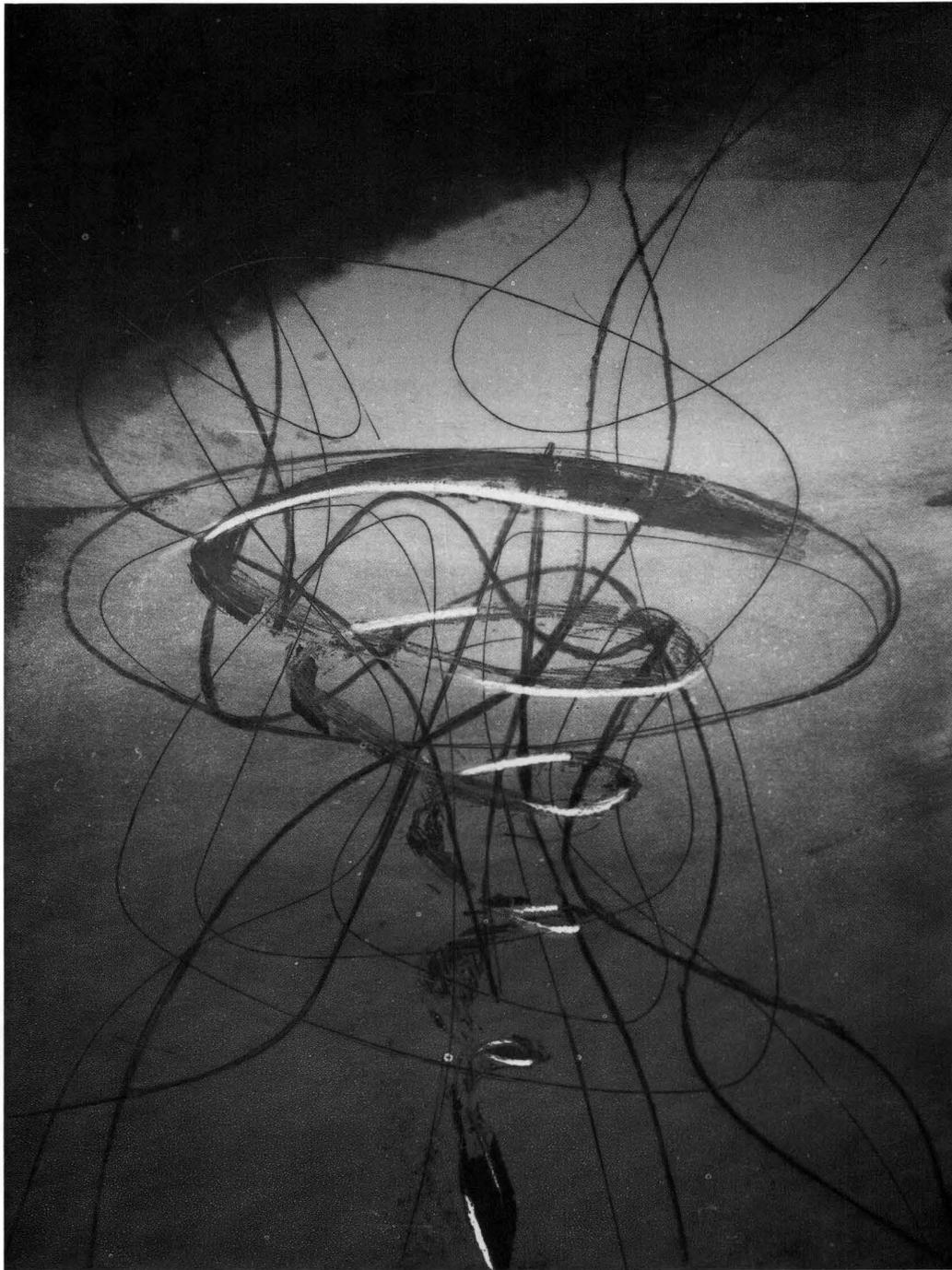


Amazon, 1945

engraving and soft-ground etching, 21/50, 25 x 26"

Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington,
Zoe Dusanne Memorial Collection,
Gift of Wesley Wehr

Photo: Richard Nicol



Downward, 1987
simultaneous color intaglio, 1/50, 15 1/2 x 12"
Collection of Désirée Hayter, Paris
Photo: TAJ