2-1-1974

One of ten thousand: a way for the printmaker; thoughts and images related to involvement in Zen Buddhism

C. Alan Fisher

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Thesis/Dissertation Collections at RIT Scholar Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of RIT Scholar Works. For more information, please contact ritscholarworks@rit.edu.
ONE OF TEN THOUSAND
A Way For The Printmaker

Thoughts and Images Related to Involvement in Zen Buddhism

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF FINE AND APPLIED ART
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF FINE ARTS

BY
C. ALAN FISHER

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 1974
CONTENTS

PREFACE ........................................ iii

PART ONE: A WAY

I. A DIRECTION FOR PRINTMAKING

A Beginning ................................. 3
The Need for a Map ....................... 6
Zen? ....................................... 11

II. THE PRINTMAKER AND HIS MEDIUM

Tools for the Platemaker ............... 19
Change: Observation .................. 25
The Nature of Problems ............. 30
Editioning: Repetition ............... 34

III. THE ESSENCE OF ZEN

Zazen ....................................... 45

PART TWO: ENVIRONMENT

I. THE STUDIO

Another Beginning ....................... 54
Tea and the Studio ..................... 59
An Album: One of Ten Thousand Press

CONCLUSION: Encouragement and a Caution .... 66

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................... 68

PORTFOLIO

List of Plates ............................ 71
PREFACE

I wish to speak in the following pages to printmakers with whom I share an interest in a common discipline. It is not, however, my desire to discuss methods of platemaking and printing. Rather, I hope we can communicate in a way you will find a bit different from a textbook approach. I wish to use the subject of printmaking, especially intaglio, as a concrete method of relating a few abstract concepts and some experiences and feelings I have had in the past year. We will discuss things such as tools, plates, acids, and the studio for through these we have a common denominator.

I wish to share with you an attitude toward the printmaking discipline, not techniques the beginning student must master, but a possible perspective for his development. We will discuss such subjects as editioning, not specifically methods of setting up a studio for editioning, but a possible way to set up the printmaker for such a discipline. I believe an attempt at mastering techniques, a philosophy, and the interaction of both are essential in the life of a printmaker.

The experiences and thoughts I share do not relate solely to printmaking, but extend to other artistic endeavors, vocations, and even simple daily activities. Therefore, I anticipate
that what I say will be of interest not only to those who have experienced printmaking, but also to others who hold a common desire to join a life with a philosophy.

It is my hope that you feel free to expand, accept in part, or totally reject what I write, for in no way do I profess expertise in either printmaking or philosophy. What I discuss is simple and practical, resulting from personal experiences. Therefore, not using personal experience as an excuse, but acknowledging its limitation, I honestly accept the responsibility for insufficient understanding. I witness an involvement, a way, an attitude, believing there is need for exchanging philosophies as well as techniques in the studio in order that we might find a way to search for our own direction and become sensitive to others. I offer this as one way of experiencing an art form; one voice offered to others seeking their own.

Alan Fisher
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, New York
February 1974
PART ONE: A WAY
I. A DIRECTION FOR PRINTMAKING

A Beginning

The Need For A Map

Zen?
In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities but in the expert's there are few.

This is also the real secret of the arts: always be a beginner.

-Shunryu Suzuki

A Beginning

For the past year I have been involved with deepening interest in a way of life called Zen. By developing my ability as a writer, I could possibly span the distance of this dissertation without mentioning Zen by name, solving some problems of misunderstanding and visions the word might encourage of fasting monks with shaven heads sitting their lives in mountain huts. But I have named a philosophy and it is the discipline of Zen, the discipline of printmaking, and the choice for practical interaction of both in a printmaker's life that I wish to discuss.

I hope that what I write will not seem as some illusive approach for the artist, a message of something beyond immediate understanding, but to exist as a simple sharing of a year's beginning.

I will not be going deep into Zen here for two reasons. First, a Zen student is considered a beginner for approximately three to five years. Since I fall well within that range, I can only relate from my first year's experiences, from what I've read, and what I look forward to.
If I can be involved with Zen for ten years or even one more year, I might write from clearer perceptions of Zen truth and deeper understanding, but right here and now I am a beginner, a novice—searching, stumbling, but, I hope, having an attitude that allows me to relate to others through practical observation.

In Japanese the phrase "shoshin" means "beginner's mind." The goal of Zen practice is to keep this beginner's mind ready for anything and open to everything. Zen teachers remind that this is a very hard thing to do for with repetition we lose our initial excitement in activities; as we become involved in a direction, holding to an objective viewpoint is difficult. They speak of the necessity for an empty mind awaiting possibilities often closed to experts.¹

Much of what I read or hear is not for my understanding at this point in time, and much of what you read of my observations you might not understand or say, "so what, that's not profound." This leads me to the second reason I refrain from lengthy discussions of abstract philosophy. I do not conceptualize Zen as a mystical, irrelevant escape from life. I believe it can be a vital and very immediate way of living each hour. In essence, its truths are simple and open, right there waiting to be seen as we make the effort to see them, forgetting about ourselves, our inadequacies as beginners, what we might have attained, or need to attain for the future, and just try to see.

In the beginner's mind there is no thought "I have attained something. . . ." When we have no thought of self, we are true beginners. Then we can really learn something. . . .

So the most difficult thing is always to keep your beginner's mind. There is no need to have a deep understanding of Zen. Even though you read much Zen literature, you must read each sentence with a fresh mind. . . . This is also the real secret of the arts: always be a beginner. Be very, very careful about this point.2

2Ibid., p. 22.
The artist must attune himself to that which wants to reveal itself and permit the process to happen through him.

-Martin Heidegger

The Need For A Map

The task of a beginning printmaker can be a threefold struggle: one with tools and the media, another of developing the ability to relate ideas visually, and very often a problem with the essential requirement of having clear statements to visualize. As students, we work diligently to build sensitivity in each area; as instructors, we eagerly await the student who has potential for excellence in all three, but usually compromise our hopes in one or more. The basic technical confrontation of printmaking is hurdle enough, but for the student who needs counseling and practice in the other areas, the studio presents a maze with two additional barriers.

One prime responsibility undertaken by an art instructor is that of encouraging each student to exercise his self-expression, his song, agreeing to provide the tools, technical aid, and counsel in this process. As students, we receive guidance by working through various visual problems that can develop sensitivity and proficiency in an art discipline. I believe we should expect nothing more. It is the student's
responsible, as the other part of this team, to bring the ideas, those songs that require composition and performance.

However, what happens when we have seemingly little or nothing worthwhile to say? How many hours I have spent trying to either drive ideas for a new image out of my mind or hoping for divine intervention in such a plight. Long walks, looking at works by other artists, reading, or creating "happenings" on the plate often helped. But repeatedly I would catch myself pushing shapes around aimlessly or playing with textures to appease the problem. What reasons I can fabricate for not working at printmaking when the ideas are not there with talk of unsatisfactory weather and crowded studios. These excuses either keep me out of the studio or drastically increase my appetite for coffee, cigarettes, and conversation.

I realize the difficulty of turning on each day or the impossibility of never encountering problems, but when such occasions are repeated often, they can develop into work habits. When we constantly choose to look outside ourselves for situations that cause us stress, we run the risk of circling round and round, never coming to center, much like a man who searches for fire with a lighted lantern.

For that small group of students who are very naturally sensitive or who have encountered intense experiences, their message seems to be there, just waiting for the right medium
of expression and guidance. What happens, though, when the
adventures do not seem exciting, when we have not packed cross-
country, gone hungry, tripped on drugs, or seem to have no
resounding social reforming message.

One suggestion might be search for the intense, seek
the encounter, and when the message is loud enough, return
to the art discipline. However, either held by responsibility
or simply not choosing to follow this direction, we continue
academic education, often going through the exercises, gathering
methods and techniques we might use someday.

Another possibility would be to involve ourselves in a
steadfast search for both a personal message and proficiency
in an art form during the time of our studies. Could it be
possible the message is there, but not clear; we might have
to look more intently. The song is not as loud; we must be
patient and quietly listen. If it's deeper and we have become
insensitive, we are going to have to dig, daily sifting each
handful. Let me share a few ideas I have come across that
concur with this possibility.

Paulus Berensohn is a potter and a teacher who was in
residence at the Penland School of Crafts during the time he
wrote his book *Finding One's Way With Clay*. In the first
section he discusses exercises using clay that he directs
for his students:

...these exercises do not come out of a purely
technical concern. They are concerned, acutely,
with the growing relationship of the potter to
his clay; with bringing more and more personality, imagination and inspiration into play; and with tapping sources deep within the experience of the potter to inform the forms he makes. In the deepest sense this is what I believe technique is—the ability to breathe the spirit of our lives into what we make. I don't believe it to be a talent that we either have or don't have. We all breathe, we are all alive, we all have unique qualities. Yet it takes hard conscious and unconscious work for most of us to connect these facts with what we make, to find our pot as we also seek our dance and our song.

And so, I am concerned here with the question of "How do we work?" "How do we exercise?" so that our bodies and the clay bodies come together strengthened and more articulate. The freedom I seek is not one that lets me do what I want to do but rather a freedom that equips me to be able to do what I need to do.1

Zen teaches that the discipline, the sensitivity, the search must start with ourselves.

When we have our body and mind in order, everything else will exist in the right place, in the right way.

But usually, without being aware of it, we try to change something other than ourselves, we try to order things outside us. But it is impossible to organize things if you yourself are not in order. When you do things in the right way, at the right time, everything else will be organized. You are the "boss." When the boss is sleeping, everyone else is sleeping. When the boss does something right, everyone will do everything right, and at the right time. This is the secret of Buddhism.2

We have different goals, various ideas about our printmaking, but I believe there is need for a map or we find ourselves confronted by a maze of crisscrossing roads. As we search for it,

---


we must realize it need not be ours for life; we can trade later if we find it unsuitable or if we change our goals. We also must be cautious that this search is not in itself an excuse for escaping the discipline of printmaking. It must be a way that can complement and interact with an art.

In the beginning there is a clumsy attempt at a union, a self-conscious approach to something that should eventually be natural and one. What is important is the attempt must be made or the student of printmaking can become a librarian of meaningless techniques or run to a closet he builds to sit behind illusive concepts.
If you work on your mind with your mind
how can you avoid an immense confusion?

-Sen Ts'AN

Zen?

It would be quite misleading for me to tell you Zen will seem like the ultimate answer after an initial involvement or become a blissful experience allowing you to freely wield an etching needle with the deft hand of an expert. It will not turn you into a mystical machine cranking out ideas and editions. In fact, you very well might slow down for a time. You might find yourself pausing to look at the way you use that needle, or changing your opinion about filing plates and cleaning an ink slab. It is possible you will start looking at your old plates and find you want to take time to scrape and burnish the images so they can be used again instead of running to buy a new sheet of metal. Reading and just sitting quietly might become important to your work.

Remember Berensohn's describing the student's task as "hard conscious and unconscious work"? (Refer to page 9.) Well, Zen is a discipline and in the beginning you will be adding a discipline to one you already have. Even if you only read of Zen and enjoy it for the teachings, you will
have to pull the time from someplace in your day. The way of Zen requires some type of commitment. That is why we speak of Zen as a practice. It necessitates, as any discipline, regular involvement. If results are desired, a practice cannot be shelved from week to week and called on for occasional inspiration. Zen does not work that way and its stronger influences are not felt through casual encounters.

But, in contrast, "Zen is not something to get excited about. Some people start a study out of curiosity and only make themselves busier. If involvement in Zen makes us worse, it is ridiculous."¹ A commitment of a few minutes a day or even once a week can satisfy an initial interest, and if the teachings are going to speak to your needs as a direction, appetite for a more serious search will grow naturally.

For whatever interests or however serious this search is to be, Zen masters give us guidelines for our approach and strongly caution against trying to intellectualize the teachings. We are asked to have a "body-mind" reaction to what we perceive. As artists, such a way is already part of our training so I would imagine we could accept the vantage point much easier than someone whose vocation requires a scientific type of rationalization. Western conceptions consider the brain as the exclusive seat of consciousness, while oriental disciplines have shown that our brain-consciousness is only one among a

number of possible forms of consciousness. Zen discipline tends toward integration and unity of these centers into what is simply stated as a body-mind function.²

We are not asked to blindly accept and not reflect on experiences, but teachers ask us to understand the nature and limitation of the intellect. All Zen discipline is aimed at going beyond abstract interpretation and constantly aims at confusing the mind until we finally give up trying to rationalize our actions.³ Artists speak of acute sensitivity, childlike perception and instinctive responses. So does Zen. Through the arts we hope for creative experiences and try to react with "gut-level" feelings so we are not far from coming to terms with the Zen way.

When we begin with Zen, we should face it with part of our art sensitivity and not immediately turn face, trying to understand it from the head. In fact, the Zen student speaks of a type of "gut-level" existence when he speaks of acting from the hara for according to Hindu and Buddhist yogic systems, there are a number of vital energy centers, the hara being one. Oriental disciplines realize the limited and lopsided effect of only reacting from the mind.

Harada-Roshi, one of the most celebrated Zen masters of his day, urged his pupils to concentrate their attention in


³Ibid., p. 29.
their hara, declaring "you must realize that the center of
the universe is in the pit of your belly."4

To facilitate his experience of this fundamental
truth, the Zen novice is instructed to focus his
mind constantly on the bottom of his hara (specifi-
cally between the navel and the pelvis) and to
radiate all mental and bodily activities from
that region. With the body-mind's equilibrium
centered in the hara, gradually a seat of con-
sciousness, a focus of vital energy is established
which influences the entire organism.5

Continual practice of centering the mind's eye in the
hara diminishes random ideas and accelerates attainment of
concentration or one-pointedness. This in turn leads to a
greater degree of mental and emotional stability since excess
blood is drawn from the head down to the abdomen "cooling"
the brain and soothing the autonomic nervous system. "One
who functions from his hara, therefore, is not easily dis-
turbed. He is moreover able to act quickly and decisively
in an emergency owing to the fact that his mind, anchored
in his hara, does not waver."6

As paradoxical as it might sound, if we as printmakers
choose the Zen way to develop as artists, we will be asked to
turn inward seeking ourselves in order to know what is without.
"Masters of traditional Japanese arts are all accomplished in
thinking and acting from the hara--they would not merit the

4Ibid., p. 67.
5Ibid., pp. 67-68.
6Ibid., p. 68.
title 'master' if they were not." For you see, Zen does not distinguish between the art and the artist or the learner and what is to be understood.

In Eugen Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery*, Daisetz T. Suzuki speaks of such purposes in the various arts in his introduction:

One of the most significant features we notice in the practice of archery, and in fact of all the arts as they are studied in Japan and probably also in other Far Eastern countries, is that they are not intended for utilitarian purposes only or for purely aesthetic enjoyment, but are meant to train the mind; indeed, to bring it into contact with the ultimate reality. Archery is therefore not practiced solely for hitting the target; the swordsman does not wield the sword just for the sake of out-doing his opponent; the dancer does not dance just to perform certain rhythmical movements of the body. The mind has first to be attuned to the Unconscious. 

Long hours of practice in archery progress with the marksman aiming at himself as Dr. Suzuki further describes:

In the case of archery, the hitter and the hit are no longer two opposing objects, but are one reality. The archer ceases to be conscious of himself as the one who is engaged in hitting the bull's-eye which confronts him. This state of unconsciousness [as opposed to self-consciousness] is realized only when, completely empty and rid of self, he becomes one with the perfecting of his technical skill, though there is in it something of a quite different order which cannot be attained by any progressive study of the art.

---

7Ibid., p. 69.


9Ibid., p. 10.
Does it sound strange? Possibly it does when we consider how often we use only our heads to struggle with printmaking. Zen asks us to practice and see in many ways hard to grasp through Western means and impossible to pick apart with rational minds. I guess that is why Zen is considered mystical or illusory and impractical. Yet the differences in emphasis and methods do not speak against its practicality. It is a way of action and interaction with life. If a monk standing on a bridge with other monks ventures to ask "How deep is the river of Zen?" he might very likely find himself thrown in that river to test the answer to such an abstract inquiry.10

I'm not going to tell you that a study of Zen will be as simple as the initial introduction we discuss in this paper. I describe it as simple, yet there is paradox. It sounds "nice," yet it can be the most intense journey we can make. I have once more talked of its active involvement, yet some people who study Zen quit their schooling or their jobs and drop out of society and go to the mountains to sit hours in meditation. If you are now or might become a serious student of Zen, the cause for such actions becomes clearer and we will discuss the reason for meditation later.

Simple? Yes. Paradoxical? Yes. Foreign? Yes, but I think only geographically. We might not be accustomed to the song, but I hear strong sounds that are blending toward the

---

same goal. If we need a proven direction, this one is certainly not new. Zen has successfully provided a way to artists for centuries.
II. THE PRINTMAKER AND HIS MEDIUM

Tools For The Platemaker

Change: Observation

The Nature of Problems

Editioning: Repetition
Heaven and earth and I are the same root;
The ten thousand things and I are of one substance.

-Sōjō

Tools For The Platemaker

One of the fears for a performer who has a song considered a "hit" is that after he has been asked to perform it so often the act becomes rote, and he stands a good chance of forgetting the words. For him the song loses some of the magic it had when he first introduced it with heart and feeling. As printmakers, something often happens after we travel a while and the art becomes a job. Things are not working as we expected and we do not progress as rapidly as we first anticipated. These are the times when nice sayings we have read either start to live or remain on the page. We get to the "marrow of Zen"\(^1\) and printmaking.

When it ceases to be a trip and becomes a journey, both disciplines lose followers. But the reaction does not have to be an either-or matter, and we might need to just stand back and take another look. Invariably, we will see need for growth and possibly a few mistakes in our practice. Mistakes are not in themselves undesirable or bad if we view them as part of a

total development. If we can accept carrying such problems with us for a while and continue on our way, we can usually go much further toward a goal. It is the longest part of the journey I wish to follow in these sections.

Thus far, most of the subjects we have discussed have only been reminders that are not specifically unique to Zen. As artists, we know the frustrations of the beginner but need to recall the directions opened to us and the excitement in anticipating a new experience. We need to stop once in a while and check our direction or see if we even have one. We want to become sensitive and believe we have those energies that have not been tapped, so even my discussion of the hara was not risky. I have indicated differences in training methods, but the goals have been similar. I now want to touch on one of those dangerous abstract concepts Zen fears, aware of the pitfalls and support I might lose, but I believe it is essential to further communication about printmaking throughout the rest of our discussion. Its theme is a central one for Henry David Thoreau and other American artists: "Life is organic and natural, and as we are related to nature, what goes on in nature has its counterpart within ourselves."2

I believe what Thoreau experienced throughout his life is compatible with the Zen experience. The artist influenced by Zen begins to realize an interaction between his individual life

---

and the life of all things. He starts to understand that every-
thing has a place in time, that change is governed by certain rules,
and that he as man is but one of those many forms. When we begin
to feel we are not part of the rhythm or above rules that belong
to everything else, we live our lives through various unnatural
perspectives. It is an aim of Zen discipline to bring us back
to harmony and union with this universal rhythm.

But even if we speak of uniting ourselves with nature and
a total existence, this indicates original opposition of the
subject and object. Zen masters teach that there are no two
opposing terms needing unification and any discriminations are
ones that we have created. We only need to clear our vision.

Now before I cannot climb out of my abstract pit, let us
wind down such intellectual verbiage and speak of active experiences.
In discussing the practice of zazen (Zen meditation) in his simple
way, Suzuki-Roshi describes the essence of following the breath
to his students.

When we practice zazen, our mind always follows our
breathing. When we inhale, the air comes into the
inner world. When we exhale, the air goes out to
the outer world. The inner world is limitless, and
the outer world is also limitless. We say "inner
world" or "outer world," but actually there is just
one whole world. In this limitless world, our
throat is like a swinging door. The air comes in
and goes out like someone passing through a swinging
door. If you think, "I breathe," the "I" is extra.
There is no you to say "I." What we call "I" is just
a swinging door which moves when we inhale and when
we exhale. It just moves; that is all. When your
mind is pure and calm enough to follow this movement,
there is nothing: no "I," no world, no mind nor body;
just a swinging door.3

3Shunryu Suzuki, Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, ed. Trudy Dixon
Here again we can either rationally pick apart such a simple example or feel it. When the Zen artist speaks of developing "no mind" or "non-action," he does not do so through inactivity or destruction as we might understand it, but through active steps freeing himself from discrimination and toward a union that permits free and natural creativity.

With such an attitude we see the discipline and tools of an art with different purpose. Of what use are the bow and arrow and target to the archer? Archery has long since been removed from the battlefield where the archer had to prove himself in bloody contests. It could have very possibly turned into a pleasant pastime if technique was the only skill to master, but archery is still a matter of life and death because the contest was always a contest of the archer with himself.\(^4\)

The archer is never taught to use the bow for selfish reasons, but to join with it until he gets into quite a muddle.

Is it "I" who draw the bow, or is it the bow that draws me into the state of highest tension? Do "I" hit the goal, or does the goal hit me? Is "It" spiritual when seen by the eyes of the body, and corporeal when seen by the eyes of the spirit—or both or neither? Bow, arrow, goal and ego, all melt into one another, so that I can no longer separate them. And even the need to separate has gone. For as soon as I take the bow and shoot, everything becomes so clear and straight forward and so ridiculously simple. . . . "Now at last," the master broke in, "the bowstring has cut right through you."\(^5\)

---


\(^5\)Ibid., p. 88.
When we enter a personal search through archery or printmaking, there is a partnership with the tools, then a muddle of identity, and finally no need for any distinction. Zen worships nothing and a simple bowstring is not seen as an animated article of adoration, but the archer has a deep respect for it as a vital part of his experience.

When we begin to look around the printmaking studio at the many tools that enter into our practice, we realize how dependent we are compared to the few the archer has. We think, "I am going to make a plate," when in reality we need needles and the plate itself for even the simplest dry point. I realize we are often in a hurry or cannot wait for hours watching acid etch into the metal, but have we ever considered the process in terms of a partnership. Is not the press just as vital a part of printing as the printer if we view our discipline through Zen.

Far from just being used to learn the technique of printmaking, I believe a studio can be an important place with an electricity of quiet anticipation and intense purpose. It is with such an attitude that an old man prepared his studio as he had each day for many years.

Some years ago I, Ssu, saw my father paint one or two pictures.

On the day when he was to paint, he would seat himself by a bright window, put his desk in order, burn incense to his right and left, and place good brushes and excellent ink beside him; then he would wash his hands and rinse his
ink-well, as if to receive an important guest, thereby calming his spirit and composing his thoughts. Not until then did he begin to paint. Does this not illustrate what he meant by not daring to face one's work thoughtlessly?^6

Is this a man putting in time with janitorial duties until he has an inspiration, or are his activities out of respect resulting from an understanding that he is only part of a discipline? Can you now start to imagine how differently from us a Zen master would care for his tools and studio; how his training in using a burin or in wiping a plate would have new meaning. The Way of Zen gives new dignity to how ink and plates are used and a different purpose to routine chores.

Once again may I remind, while Zen should never go out of our daily lives, you are seeing that it has something in it which makes it aloof. Zen is simple, but not a sweet discipline for slouches to hide inactivity behind while they flee making plates for a "mystical trip" cleaning the studio. The bow is still a bow for the archer, cleaning an ink slab is still cleaning an ink slab in the discipline of printmaking. "Followers of identity and tranquillity are to be given the warning: they are ridden by concepts; let them rise to facts and live in and with them."^7


Who can wait quietly while the mud settles?

-Lao Tsu

Change: Observation

Zen talks about freedom, freely entering into our art and being natural with life. This freedom comes not when we throw off rules, but when we become more aware of some basic regulations that govern life. One of these is change.

As a public service to encourage our health, and to sell their product, the Dairymen's Cooperative Sales Association supports an advertisement that talks of "a new you coming everyday" and the millions of cells our body builds daily. The cartoon shows a haggard transformed into a youthful, beautiful woman, inferring that this was accomplished by drinking three glasses of milk each day. The over-zealous milk drinker might rush to consume gallon upon gallon, believing if three is sufficient, tremendous quantities could produce miracles. What they do not tell us is that even though milk is the "perfect food," it can only be healthful to our natural bodily changes. There are also millions of cells that age and die each day, so while we can get healthier skin, we cannot change a nose, or eyes, or halt our aging process with their product.
When Zen talks of a reality, or truth of life, it speaks of developing a healthy attitude toward that truth. If we understand the regulations, we can be free by knowing our limitations and enter into each moment naturally. Change is a reality whether we like it or not, whether we force it, speed it up, or try to eliminate it; change "is." It is not something we have to attain or acquire. Change is already ours; it is us. There is no "I" or no "change." They are the same.1

Sometimes when we try to force a discipline beyond our capabilities at the moment or try to stop a change, such as aging, we get more from our effort than is beneficial. Zen does not say we should sit and do nothing and printmaking will penetrate us, but it is a long process of osmosis. Finding another parallel situation in Zen study:

After you have practiced for a while, you will realize that it is not possible to make rapid, extraordinary progress. Even though you try very hard, the progress you make is always little by little. It is not like going out in a shower in which you know when you get wet. In a fog, you do not know you are getting wet, but as you keep walking you get wet little by little. If your mind has ideas of progress, you may say, "Oh, this pace is terrible!" But actually it is not. When you get wet in a fog, it is very difficult to dry yourself. So there is no need to worry about progress. It is like studying a foreign language; you cannot do it all of a sudden, but by repeating it over and over you will master it. . . . We can say either that we make progress little by little, or that we do not even expect to make progress. Just to be sincere and make full effort in each moment is enough.2


2 Ibid., p. 46.
In developing sensitivity through printmaking, if we unnaturally force this change, we may speed past important building principles along the way or start taking excess passengers such as ulcers and headaches for our efforts. Zen teachers would say we are carrying a lot of excess baggage; some we can see and other parcels we are not even aware of. The reason for daily discipline is to strip ourselves of these extras so we can freely enter into our art.3

We start to see how bound up we can get from trying to push too hard. But be careful, it is very possible to get those same ulcers and headaches from pushing too hard to not push so hard. If we are used to quick tempers and fast pace in our life style, then by imposing a different way unnaturally we run the risk of becoming pressure cookers ready to explode from supressing what is part of us now. We are warned of the dangers of getting caught in servitude to a facade resulting in animal training and added confusion.4

We are talking about a discipline that neither holds us to laws, nor frees us from essential regulations, but clears eyes so we can see truths and work within them. Zen is not rigid and has no dogmas for the individual, just a way.5

---


One day a man said to Zen Master Ikkyu:
"Master, will you please write for me some maxims of the highest wisdom?"
Ikkyu immediately took his brush and wrote the word "Attention."
"Is that all?" asked the man. "Will you not add something more?"
Ikkyu then wrote twice running: "Attention. Attention."
"Well," remarked the man rather irritably. "I really don't see much depth or subtlety in what you have just written."
Then Ikkyu wrote the same words three times running: "Attention. Attention. Attention."
Half angered, the man demanded: "What does that word "Attention" mean anyway?"
And Ikkyu answered gently: "Attention means attention."

The method or technique is simple observation. As we make our plates, we keep pulling proofs to see where we are at a certain time. If we work on a plate too long, it is hard to see what the plate looks like so we make a proof and tack it to the wall. Then we stand back and either make a decision or we realize we are still too involved with the plate and go home for supper. After we come back, the intervening time gives us a different view. We can see direction clearer if we get away from our work, away from our involvement, and just observe.

If we wish to become printmakers, observe. Observe what has happened in printmaking before we started, be attentive to what other people and the plates and the acid have to show, and go beyond technique. We might know how to use a burin, but how do we react to the plate? How do we feel when progress is slow in our work? Are we pushing too hard and getting depressed or could we be too excited or proud of what we are doing?

---

6Ibid., pp. 10-11.
Our discipline is one of long steadfast observation. Knowledge is opaque like muddy pools. "Who can wait quietly while the mud settles?"7

If you can get to that place where you see the interrelatedness of everything, you see the oneness of it all

-Baba Ram Dass

The Nature of Problems

Eugen Herrigel, author of Zen in the Art of Archery, accounts that after years of practice, one day, even though his arrow only grazed the edge of the target, the Master told him, "That was a right shot," adding, "and so it must begin. But enough for today, otherwise you will take special pains with the next shot and spoil the good beginning."¹ Mr. Herrigel had hit the target many times before, but for some reason that arrow marked his beginning and the Master had what might seem a strange attitude about the achievement.

After that, many more shots failed to be "right shots," but occasionally a few came off in close succession. If his student showed even the least flicker of satisfaction, the Master would turn on him with unwonted fierceness. "What are you thinking of?" he would cry. "You know already that you should not grieve over bad shots; learn how not to rejoice over the good ones. You must free yourself from the buffetings of pleasure and pain

and learn to rise above them in equanimity, to rejoice as though not you but another had shot well. This too you must practice unceasingly—you cannot conceive how important it is.\(^2\)

"What mechanical treatment," we might respond, for as students we are usually most productive after praise from an instructor. If we have a few days when things go well, we will run on an emotional high with our minds in tune and think nothing of working through the night. But as artists, we also have reputations for quick tempers and depression. Certainly not all fit into such a stereotype, but if we show such extremes, we are at least tolerated, if not forgiven, when we plead our case using signs that historically point to such occupational hazards.

We are a people who work because of our emotions and to think I am suggesting we become unfeeling robots, sharing no joy or sadness with life would be ridiculous. I personally have no intention of becoming a stonefaced artist suppressing my feelings, and we must be careful not to miss the Master's point. He was not warning the archer against observing how he felt when there is a "right shot," but was cautioning Mr. Herrigel about becoming too involved in both failure and success.

So once again we are discussing change and a way of seeing, but in this section I would like to spend a little time with what Zen would say about problems. For I am starting to understand that I am programmed to a roller-coaster way of working, resulting from a barometer I accepted to measure good to bad, easy to

\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 87-88.
difficult, or pain to pleasure. The "highs" are great and the work more productive, but when difficulties set in and I become too involved with them, I can count on a few "down" days. If there were some way to accept problems as graciously as we hold to success, our progress as printmakers would be more steady.

Zen teachers understand how we control ourselves by systems of two-sided thinking with good days and bad, achievement and failure, so the archery master knew the danger of his student becoming bound by the "right shot." When we are having problems, we can find comfort believing, "It's so bad now, things can't get worse. They must get better." We always find it easy to accept change for the better, yet is it so difficult to accept change in the opposite direction if we think of success as well as problems in our total development as printmakers?

If we really believe in the discipline of printmaking, we need to accept the total experience. As far as reorienting our two-sided viewpoint:

The only way out of that is to take the poles of every set of opposites and see the way in which they are one.

And: If you can get to that place where you see the interrelatedness of everything
And: You see the oneness in it all
Then: No longer are you attached to your polarized position
When: You can center and see your whole life as a story unfolding
Then: The moment-to-moment ego involvement "Am I getting enough at this moment?" ceases to be a dominant theme. . .

\[\text{3Baba Ram Dass, Remember Be Here Now, (Albuquerque, New Mexico: \ Lama Foundation, Newspaper Printing Corporation, 1971), p. 30}\]
The beginning student hears of the "single-minded" way of Zen and the sound of the phrase seems so narrow and closed minded at first. But after further practice, the way is seen, as the previous quote describes, as a broadening habit that finally erases discrimination of the two-sided view. For just as fear of further problems makes us tense about continuing, in a similar manner, when we hold to success, it is from a fear of future problems we might encounter. With single-minded understanding, the printmaker can face each day and each situation freely with a new interpretation and equal effort.\(^4\)

However, which do we work on—the understanding or the effort? If we spend all our time reflecting to determine the good in bad problems and the harm in success, we will again clutter our minds with the puzzle of the two-sided way and fall into our old pit of abstract thinking when we should be working. (I know, it sounded so simple before. Why am I throwing in a curve?) The archery master might bellow, "Get out of your puzzle and notch the next arrow." The effort is important. If we live each moment with the same effort, there is no chance to get caught by the mind.\(^5\) We see by seeing, we will eventually understand by doing; doing everything totally so no trace remains of our effort.\(^6\)


\(^5\)Ibid., p. 92.

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 63.
When walking, just walk,
When sitting, just sit,
Above all, don't wobble.
-Yun-Men

Editioning: Repetition

The edition is the reason we are printmakers. If we wanted to produce unique images, we would be called by another name. But, even though our effort is to get the plate ready to edition, I imagine a majority of us would list that process as least enjoyable and anticlimatic. After the excitement of preparing the plate, proofing various ways to find just the right ink, paper, and technique for printing, we must venture into the repetitive test of our art. Inevitably when we estimate half a day's work for an edition, we can add a few more hours or even another day to the job if we consider problems and fatigue the duty bestows. How can we describe to someone who has never editioned one hundred or even ten prints the challenge it presents for patience, precision and endurance. Remind ourselves of "single-mindedness," "oneness," and all those other Zen terms, but it is still editioning. When we put it all together, it is finally just repetition.

In earlier days of printmaking, a handprinted etching was considered a relatively rapid method of reproducing images. In
contrast to methods of rapid publication in the printing industry today, our techniques seem more and more archaic. I often wonder if the overall pace of our life style, the speed of transportation and the efficiency of our machines psychologically hinder patience and the complete involvement required by our slow work. I have seen in myself a need for an alternative attitude toward the repetition of the edition.

We discussed in previous sections that practice and experience deepen understanding of a Zen attitude and little by little this attitude begins to manifest itself in daily activities. With this deeper understanding, objects and situations often considered as opposites or as possessing varying values also begin to merge without distinctions. Just as the artist begins to feel a union or at one with his tools and media, the activities he performs take new significance. Viewing these with Zen, they slowly begin to stand without labels of "exciting" or "mundane" or duties that are liked or disliked, but simply duties and activities. Trying to involve himself in each moment, each task with a totality and concentration, mundane chores start to reflect new expressiveness. Walking, eating, wiping plates, cleaning the studio all become ways of practicing Zen.

"Asked how he exercised himself, a master replied, 'when I am hungry, I eat; when tired, I sleep.' The reply was sharp. 'That is what everybody does!'"¹

The great Zen scholar, Dr. D. T. Suzuki, makes a similar reference to a more contemporary audience. He describes his Zen practice in the following manner:

I raise my hand; I take a book from the other side of this desk; I hear the boys playing ball outside my window; I see the clouds blown away beyond the neighboring woods;--in all these things I am practicing Zen. I am living Zen. No wordy discussion is necessary, nor any explanation.2

The master in the first situation goes on to explain. "When they eat, they eat but are thinking of other things, thereby allowing themselves to be disturbed; when they sleep, they do not sleep, but dream of a thousand things. One thing at a time in full concentration is mental discipline."3

Master Dogen talking of concentration on the moment states:

Without looking forward to tomorrow every moment, you must think only of this day and this hour. Because tomorrow is difficult and unfixed and difficult to know, you must think of following the Buddhist way while you live today. . . . You must concentrate on Zen practice without wasting time, thinking that there is only this day and this hour. After that it becomes easy.4

Zen to the outsider might seem to skirt around necessary activities in a discipline such as archery or swordsmanship, but in its own way it strikes at the heart of the art from within the student. In his book Zen and Japanese Culture, Dr. Suzuki relates the stories of two students, one a novice monk, the other the student of a swordmaster.

---

2Ibid., p. 267.

3Ibid., p. 265.

4Ibid., p. 265.
The object of Zen training consists in making us realize that Zen is our daily experience and that it is not something put in from the outside. Tennō Dōgo (T'ien-huang Tao-wu, 748-807) illustrates the point most eloquently in his treatment of a novice monk, while an unknown Japanese sword-master demonstrates it in the more threatening manner characteristic of his profession. Tennō Dōgo's story runs as follows:

Dōgo had a disciple called Sōshin (Ch'ung-hsin). When Sōshin was taken in as a novice, it was perhaps natural for him to expect lessons in Zen from his teacher the way a schoolboy is taught at school. But Dōgo gave him no special lessons on the subject, and this bewildered and disappointed Sōshin. One day he said to the master, "It is some time since I came here, but not a word has been given me regarding the essence of the Zen teaching." Dōgo replied, "Since your arrival I have ever been giving you lessons on the matter of Zen discipline."

"What kind of lesson could it have been?"
"When you bring me a cup of tea in the morning, I take it; when you serve me a meal, I accept it; when you bow to me, I return it with a nod. How else do you expect to be taught in the mental discipline of Zen?"

Sōshin hung his head for a while, pondering the puzzling words of the master. The master said, "If you want to see, see right at once. When you begin to think, you miss the point."

The swordsman's story is this:

When a disciple came to a master to be disciplined in the art of swordplay, the master, who was in retirement in his mountain hut, agreed to undertake the task. The pupil was made to help him gather kindling, draw water from the nearby spring, split wood, make fires, cook rice, sweep the rooms and the garden, and generally look after his household. There was no regular or technical teaching in the art. After some time the young man became dissatisfied, for he had not come to work as servant to the old gentleman, but to learn the art of swordsmanship. So one day he approached the master and asked him to teach him. The master agreed.

The result was that the young man could not do any piece of work with any feeling of safety. For when he began to cook rice early in the morning, the master would appear and strike him from behind with a stick. When he was in the midst of his sweeping,
he would be feeling the same sort of blow from somewhere, some unknown direction. He had no peace of mind, he had to be always on the qui vive. Some years passed before he could successfully dodge the blow from wherever it might come. But the master was not quite satisfied with him yet.

One day the master was found cooking his own vegetables over an open fire. The pupil took it into his head to avail himself of this opportunity. Taking up his big stick, he let it fall over the head of the master, who was then stooping over the cooking pan to stir its contents. But the pupil's stick was caught by the master with the cover of the pan. This opened the pupil's mind to the secrets of the art, which had hitherto been kept from him and to which he had so far been a stranger. He then, for the first time, appreciated the unparalleled kindness of the master.

The secrets of perfect swordsmanship consist in creating a certain frame or structure of mentality which is made always ready to respond instantly, that is, immediately to what comes from the outside. While technical training is of great importance, it is after all something artificially, consciously, calculatingly added and acquired. Unless the mind that avails itself of the technical skill somehow attunes itself to a state of the utmost fluidity or mobility, anything acquired or superimposed lacks spontaneity of natural growth. . . . What the swordsman aimed at was to make the discipline attain to this realization. It cannot be taught by any system specifically designed for the purpose, it must simply grow from within. The master's system was really no system in the proper sense. But there was a "natural" method in his apparent craziness, and he succeeded in awakening in his young disciple's mind something that touched off the mechanism needed for the mastery of swordsmanship.

Dōgo the Zen master did not have to be attacking his disciple all the time with a stick. The swordsman's object was more definite and limited to the area of the sword, whereas Dōgo wanted to teach by getting to the source of being from which everything making up our daily experience ensues. Therefore, when Sōshin began to reflect on the remark Dōgo made to him, Dōgo told him: "No reflecting whatever. When you want to see, see immediately. As soon as you tarry (that is, as soon as an intellectual interpretation or mediation takes place), the whole thing
goes awry." This means that, in the study of Zen, conceptualization must go, for as long as we tarry at this level we can never reach the area where Zen has its life.⁵

Soon after I began reading about Zen, I came upon such discussions of the importance of the moment and concentration on the here and now. It was during the first part of the year and I had made a New Year's resolution to swim each lunch hour to tone up my body which had softened from winter months of inactivity. Due to initial aches and pains of the first week at my new venture and humiliating inability to fight the water for more than a paltry two lengths, my exercising seemed doomed to sporadic skirmishes that would fall short of the resolution. Setting a goal of one mile each day by the spring, the first week made that mile seem unattainable. Disgusted, I would talk to myself in the shower about humiliation, flabby muscles, and how ridiculous the mile goal was.

For some reason I also began discussing with myself the opportunity of using the Zen thoughts I had read--abstracts about the here and now and becoming one with. Thus, my first Zen experience of practical, chlorinated meditation began.

From that point onward the progress was relatively simple and steady. Remembering I had been swimming since age five, seeing no need to fight the water, I began relaxing, taking each stroke and kick for the moment. Trying to experience rhythm of

swimming, I began to enjoy the repetition of each breath, pushing only as far as I could comfortably swim each day. In perfecting the coordination, each stroke, kick, and breath started to have meaning.

Certainly each day was not successful. Sometimes the swim would be mentally therapeutic for the day's problems, other noontimes it would add to the frustration. But at those instances when the attitude was right, when each stroke was the only one important, there was a cooperation with the water in the art of swimming, and what could seem a mundanely repetitious activity became a calming influence for the day. If I might even be audacious enough, there were a few moments in those months when I was not even aware of swimming. I was just walking when walking, just swimming when swimming. However, as soon as I reflected, as the monk, on this feeling or as Zen would say on the non-swimming, it was gone and I was self-conscious again of distance and attainment, pain or pleasure, good and bad.

As the months passed and I reached my initial goal, there was no need anymore to play such games as New Year's resolution. I simply went each noon hour to swim a mile. One day, feeling quite encouraged in my progress, I chanced the second mile and succeeded. I also succeeded in getting very ill.

I later read what Zen master Shunryu Suzuki said in one of his talks. It might have saved my illness.

Zen is not some kind of excitement, but concentration on our usual everyday routine. If you become too busy and too excited, your mind becomes rough and ragged. . .
Usually we become busier and busier, day by day, year by year, especially in our modern world. . . . But if we become completely involved in our own change, we will become completely involved in our busy life and we will be lost. . . . Just continue in your calm, ordinary practice and your character will be built up. If your mind is always busy, there will be no time to build and you will not be successful, particularly if you work too hard on it. Building character is like making bread—you have to mix it little by little, step by step, and moderate temperature is needed. You know yourself quite well, and you know how much temperature you need. You know exactly what you need. But if you get too excited, you will forget how much temperature is good for you, and you will lose your way. This is very dangerous.6

It must seem as though we have again skirted the issue. In order to talk about editioning, I have discussed everything but printing from swordsmanship and swimming to baking bread. It is not my intention, nor am I able to impart some magical method of hypnosis that makes editioning a joy. I personally have only caught instances of what Zen masters share in their teachings, but that has been sufficient to make me search deeper toward a clearer vision some day. There are hundreds of books on printmaking methods where one can find editioning techniques and countless Zen writings I have not seen that address themselves to the nature of such a task. I have no purpose in exhausting either subject, only to give an indication of how they each might practically complement the discipline of the other.

Both printmaking and Zen are ways of life requiring slow, steadfast practice for strong development and deep understanding.

If we understand the length of time needed for mastery in both disciplines, we comprehend the necessity of involving ourselves in each moment. Often we balk at routine tasks of printmaking, siding with the novice monk or the young swordsman. Time and time again I have dreaded editioning, hesitated to clean tools or the studio, but every once in a while the Zen attitude turns me around and gives the mundane tasks new meaning, requiring the same energy of each activity.

Let us move to one more thought before closing this section. From what I have written and quoted, it would seem that the ultimate objective of Zen is to elevate each activity to a higher somewhat religious level. This is a part of the practice, but the purpose of Zen discipline is a way to see ourselves, objects, and situations as they really are; to see truth. If practiced, Zen will change perspectives but we should finally be satisfied to view the original nature of everything.

Before a man studies Zen, to him mountains are mountains and waters are waters; after he gets an insight into the truth of Zen through instruction of a good master, mountains to him are not mountains and waters are not waters; but after this when he really attains to the abode of rest, mountains are once more mountains and waters are waters.7

Through Zen, editioning becomes more than editioning, repetition a way of practice; all activities lose their different values, but even then we are not finished until they return to their original nature.

To print each print of an edition is enough for the hour, to wipe ink for a moment is sufficient for the moment. When we begin to dwell on time or the end of an edition, we have a big burden on our mind. Confusing this moment with thought of another frustrates concentration and ultimate completion of a task. When we put it all together, it is finally just repetition.
III. THE ESSENCE OF ZEN

Zazen
Water is yielding but all-conquering.

-Tao Cheng

Zazen

Zazen, or the Zen form of seated meditation, is the most effective means by which a Zen student can accomplish self-realization. It has developed as the principle discipline of the Zen student and meditation is an essential part of an artist's training through Zen. No doubt you are wondering that if it is such an essential part in all we have discussed, why have I waited until now to make its introduction. "Ah ha," you might say. "He talks about simplicity, active involvement and practicality in printmaking to get our attention. Then after the proverbial foot is in the door, he starts telling us those weird, ascetic theories about sitting around in meditation."

It is because of the possibility of just such a reaction to any form of meditation that I chose to show how Zen is influencing me as a printmaker before talking about some reasons for zazen as the foundation of this involvement. As the nature of this paper has been to introduce and not exhaust the relation of Zen to printmaking or any of the arts, I wish to restate

---

this same format for the remainder of the discussion. Therefore, it is not my intention to describe in detail how zazen is done or the total ramifications of its daily practice, but to use this part to further illumine the preceding sections and as a bridge to understanding the philosophy behind the One of Ten Thousand Press in Rochester, New York. If you are interested in reading more about actual zazen procedures, may I recommend two books that personally have been very helpful and strongly influenced this paper. One is The Three Pillars of Zen by Philip Kaplea, roshi of the Zen Center in Rochester, New York, and the other is Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, which contains informal talks of Shunryu Suzuki, former roshi of the Los Altos Zen Center in California.

We must first establish an understanding that zazen is a form of meditation particular to Zen, and there exist many other meditation practices in other disciplines which have different goals and methods. So from this point on I will speak not of meditation in general, but specifically of zazen.

One initial aim of zazen (There are others, but they go beyond the purpose of this discussion.) is to develop the power of concentration. More than just the ability to concentrate, it is a means to develop a dynamic power of concentration. Zen pulls no power from outside ourselves, so we first have to believe the power is within, ours already, to be used when we coordinate a method to tap the resource. Once mobilized, we act instantly like the swordsman, even in the most unexpected circumstances, without pausing to collect our wits.2

2Ibid., p. 47.
I realize that as artists we have no need to fight or break five brushes with the heel of our hand. But for the artist, this instant action and reaction is more subtle but not less powerful. Through zazen we get closer to that instinctive union between the subject and artist and closer to the childlike rapport with nature that does not analyze but responds immediately. Be careful not to confuse this with creating uncontrolled images resulting from "accidents." It is a combination of a child's natural, instant response and the mature control of an artist at one with his medium.

The Zen artist who has developed this power of concentration is always in command of himself and the circumstances of his life, though not through a western connotation of force, but an eastern power of submission. He does not develop supernatural faculties to change what might confront him and is still faced with problems, but he is not a slave to these problems or his environment and is able to move from one moment to the next freed from the two-sided view and the fear and frustration such thinking carries.3 There are many instances in oriental philosophy where this power of complete adaptation is compared to the most supple of resources.

Clouds move freely, forming and re-forming in response to external conditions and their own nature, unhampered by obstacles. "Water is yielding but all conquering. Water extinguishes Fire, or finding itself likely to be defeated, escapes as steam and reforms. Water washes away soft Earth or, when confronted by rocks, seeks a way round. Water corrodes Iron until it crumbles to dust; it saturates the atmosphere so Wind dies. Water gives way to obstacles with deceptive humility, for no power can prevent it following

3Ibid., p. 47.
its destined course to the sea. Water conquers by yielding; it never attacks but always wins the last battle. . . ." These virtues of clouds and water are the virtues of the perfected Zen man, whose life is characterized by freedom, spontaneity, humility and inner strength, plus the resilience to adapt himself to changing circumstances without strain or anxiety.  

In the first part of this section, we have just about summarized all that has been said thus far. "That's great," comes the reply. "Now you're going to tell me I can get all this just by sitting quietly."

Yes, this is a starting point to understanding zazen, for we know how restful it can be to come home at the end of a difficult day and just sit or lie quietly for a half hour trying not to think of anything. We also have experienced the value of a good night's sleep to face the next day with a different attitude or a chance to take a vacation, leaving the job behind for a time. In all cases we calm down, the inner batteries recharge, and we are ready to start again.

Zazen is not just a rest. Although it assumes a seated posture, it is one where the back and neck are straight, but not rigid, since both a slouching or rigid spine cause fatigue. The trunk of the body does not lean to the left or the right and the head is neither tilted to either side, although the chin is tucked slightly with the eyes directed slightly downward.  

---

4Ibid., pp. 326-327.

5Ibid., p. 31.
time, but it is not meant for dreaming. The eyes remain open to discourage sleep but also focus on nothing special so they are not distracted. For it is not the function to see with the eye but the mind's eye, and when all voluntary motion has stopped, the hands resting gently in the lap, the concentration is centered in the hara. Thoughts may come and go, for it is not the purpose of zazen to attempt the impossibility of stopping the mind. But neither are these thoughts held. They come and they go, not disturbing the centered concentration of the mind's eye in the hara and we do not focus on them in a similar manner as the eyes are rested.

After a short time, the only thing we are aware of is the concentration in the hara and our breathing. Breathing becomes the mediator between body and mind and its unifying ability becomes the second important factor in zazen. It is not easy to assume the concentration of zazen for long periods of time at first, so the breath becomes the vehicle that carries the concentration. The breath is natural and not controlled and we follow it in and out of the body. At first even though all voluntary motion but the breathing is stopped and we are still, our minds will continue to dart about and concentration is difficult.

---

6 Refer to pp. 13-14 above for discussion of the "hara."


8 Ibid., p. 12.

9 Refer to pp. 21 above for Shunryu Suzuki's description of the essence of following the breath.
After daily practice, concentration becomes stronger and remaining calm and still is easier. In the beginning, to sit sincerely each day for possibly five minutes is far better than marathon sessions. Zazen is a way of discipline, not a penalty. It is easier to practice when we can find a place that is light to discourage drowsiness, but not bright so the eyes may rest. It should be quiet and barren so we are not distracted by noise or objects.\textsuperscript{10}

Zazen has something in common with just sitting or lying quietly, sleeping or a vacation, but it goes further and penetrates much deeper. The outward result might seem the same at first, but all similarities stop there. Simple resting can calm nerves temporarily, but we usually come back to face life with the same perspective and the frustration grows again. Zazen does not provide instant insights into self-realization. Its benefits lie in devoted daily practice. It is not sleep and should never be considered in lieu of rest, but it is much more than idle time and vacant inaction. Zazen is keen awareness; the "attention" Ikkyu wrote for the man asking about laws for gaining knowledge. (Refer to page 28 above.)

Energies which formerly were squandered in compulsive drives and purposeless actions are preserved and channeled into a unity through correct Zen sitting; and to the degree that the mind attains one-pointedness through zazen it no longer disperses its force in the uncontrolled proliferation of idle thoughts. The entire nervous system is relaxed and soothed, inner tensions eliminated, and the tone of all organs

\textsuperscript{10}This description is only meant to be comparative and should not be considered a directive for someone who wishes to practice zazen. Please refer to the books listed earlier in this section.
strengthened. In short, by realigning the physical, mental, and psychic energies through proper breathing, concentration, and sitting, zazen establishes a new body-mind equilibrium with its center of gravity in the vital *kara*.

With the body and mind consolidated, focused, and energized, the emotions respond with increased sensitivity and purity and volition exerts itself with greater strength of purpose. No longer are we dominated by the intellect at the expense of feeling, nor driven by the emotions unchecked by reason or will. Eventually zazen leads to a transformation of personality and character. Dryness, rigidity, and self-centeredness give way to flowing warmth, resiliency, and compassion, while self-indulgence and fear are transmuted into self-mastery and courage.\(^{11}\)

PART TWO: ENVIRONMENT
I. THE STUDIO

Another Beginning

Tea And The Studio

An Album: One of Ten Thousand Press
Another Beginning

During the early spring of 1973, Diane and I literally crawled through the upstairs of a garage, over and under junk and dodging hornets, to make our way to a large Dutch door at the other side. Friends of ours had agreed to move into a badly neglected house on Irondequoit Bay with a friend of theirs, Tom Borshoff, and were making plans to remodel the house while living there. We were getting the grand tour of their waterfront dream and the garage which stands on the hill behind the house. After the latches were unlocked and the big door opened, we could see the bay and the scene was so peaceful and refreshing compared to the junk behind us. I cannot recall who mentioned it first, but someone on the expedition suggested that after some work, the hovel could be a nice studio for some artist. As we pushed our way to the filthy windows to wipe a porthole, we talked more about the possibilities of transforming the garage into a studio along the bay. Using our imaginations to clear out the rubble and clean the glass, we could begin to see the atmosphere a studio could have with a view of the water and light from the large windows. So the One of Ten Thousand Press had a beginning as a dream not unlike many that have started with a crawl through an old house or shed with a hint of remodeling in mind.
Diane and I joked about the idea of starting a studio with me a student and hers being our only income, but as we continued, the talk became more serious. A decision to go ahead with the dream was made later that spring when I began sending resumes around the country to seek college employment. College positions were not plentiful and we started to fear that my applications were probably filed with hundreds of others waiting a reasonable time for eventual disposal. We had saved some money in the fortunate event there would be openings and we needed to move, but the mounting expense of traveling to seek jobs and moving everything we had accumulated in Rochester further prompted the idea for what we considered a wiser investment. If we used our savings and borrowed some additional money, we could buy a press and set about remodeling the garage. Thus another fairly common decision of economic efficiency was made in favor of a studio. From that decision on, however, the development of the printmaking studio slowly began to change in nature as a philosophy for it came into focus.

This philosophy did not suddenly appear and was grounded more at the beginning in the economic status of a patient working woman and her idealistic student husband. Using printmaking textbooks, I would make "dream lists" of materials and equipment "required" in a combination lithography, etching, and silk screen studio--and Diane would make her grocery lists. I would cut the list to etching and silk screen, and she would pay the rent and the phone, utility, and dentist bills. Only etching would finally remain with plans in a few years to incorporate the others; Diane
would dig through boxes of her old clothes and raise the hems. In such a manner, she, the "master of the marriage," would shock me back to our reality.

The sequence of the next developments seemed so unrelated at the time. They range from sitting in a dentist chair to visiting a collector of "valuable junk." The dentist chair story is briefly this. Between drillings, I attempted a novacained conversation with my dentist at the Eastman Dental Center. He was studying there under a man who is well known as a master dentist. In telling him about our plans for the studio, we discussed expenses we both incurred for tools and supplies during our schooling. There never seemed to be an end to the tools we "just had to have" for specific jobs, and the thought of eventually starting either business was frightening, even though my costs would be a mere fraction of his. As he continued drilling, he said it never ceased to amaze him how few tools the head dentist used in the same tasks he himself performs. His teacher has one tool that has become somewhat all encompassing through years of experience, and he often just uses his thumbnail to design models from dental impressions.

It was from this discussion (and a slight understanding of Zen by this time) that establishing a studio with the barest essentials to adequately meet a task was started. After that, cutting the budget was not a process of dismembering; but a challenge of ingenuity and efficiency. I held to the idea of getting an excellent press that would print most processes but
believed firmly that all the equipment provided for our use as students generally clouds any hopes of establishing a private studio.

Another friend, Bruce Procter, who has established a small commercial printing business did so through a philosophy that he can live sufficiently using perfectly good "junk" other printers and affluent people discard. He makes routine visits to printing companies and offers to take antiquated machinery "off their hands." Most offers are gladly accepted when he assures them the old equipment will again be in service. Diane and I visited Bruce one hot summer day. His house, crammed with various collections, has only one narrow path to the living room where we sat in air-conditioned comfort in our private cubbyholes between the presses. The air conditioner had apparently fallen from someone's upper window and was left along the sidewalk as refuse. It made no attempt at beauty but had a personality that matched his decor perfectly. As we sat and talked of his finds, Bruce gave me direction to the best junk yards and most affluent streets in the city. Considering our poverty, this visit gave new hope for equipment, but his example of collecting anything and everything went against my attempt to use only the essential. So very carefully I picked through the scrap yards and discerned my way up and down Rochester streets, storing all the treasure in our basement until the studio was ready.

Tom Borshoff had begun to remodel the studio, and during summer school that year, David Dickenson, a printmaking instructor
at Rochester Institute of Technology, and I gave each other pep
talks about the scope and possible need for a private printmaking
studio in Rochester. David had his own press and was already
printing editions for other artists, so our discussions were very
encouraging factors as the studio began to take shape. Neither
of us had any immediate hopes of living from the sale of our own
prints, but we continued to expand the idea that a printmaker
with a press could not only print editions but could also rent
studio space and time on the press to other interested printmakers.

And so the summer continued, more in talk of economics and
function than philosophy of the studio, but I wish to share this experience hoping you will recall it if you look around an estab-
lished studio thinking there is no way to continue printmaking
after you leave school. Yes, it takes planning and searching
and can rarely be built with the elaborate plans offered in text-
books. But if you decide someday to try a similar venture, be
willing to compromise what you first desire. Ask for guidance
from another person who is not an idealistic artist, but one who
makes the grocery lists and knows something of reality.

Even today, most decisions about the studio are economic
and probably should remain so if an art business is to succeed,
but they slowly are backed by a Zen influence. What is more
important, concurring with the thesis of this paper, the One of
Ten Thousand Press had its beginning and is developing with a
direction strongly established in a practical philosophy.
Tea and the Studio

If someone were to ask me for a quick response concerning the philosophy of One of Ten Thousand Press, I would say nothing rather than expect them to see how the pieces from the past year fit together. It is just as difficult to talk about the studio as it is to indicate some of my experiences through Zen. I can show them how the press works and we can talk about techniques used to make the work tables, but the first time someone sees the studio, I would probably not even attempt to share reasons for the tables or how I feel when I work there. What is amusing, of the few people who have visited the studio, fewer still even venture more than surface questions, and I am thankful for that.

Whether they understand its philosophy or not, when visitors come up the stairs, I often want to put them at ease by assuring them that they are not required to choose sides, responding with approval or disapproval. In many ways it is unlike the usual printmaking studio and so oriental in design that I realize some people who have known me for a long time wonder if I am becoming eccentric or making a ridiculous attempt at building a facade that is pseudo-Zen. All I can say is I ask those same questions of myself, for at this point in my study of Zen I do fluctuate from day to day and reflect too much. Many days I go to the studio and it has little meaning for I might be tense or upset,
but at other times it fulfills the functions it was designed for. Often I wonder if I am not like a little boy who buys a ball glove with the signature of his favorite player, hoping it will improve his fielding, and I think it is all a form of hero worship. But there are those days I can get so close to the essence of oriental philosophy that I know the reasons for the studio are real. Each detail has been carefully planned with the influence of my philosophy of the Zen Way and a limited understanding of the art of tea.

"This is a fine atmosphere for a tea room," you might remark, "but where does printmaking fit into the design?" The atmosphere is evidently introverted and on the surface its objectives seem removed from life. If environment has a great deal to do with molding a man's viewpoint, the studio would appear to encourage such introverted development. With the same type of reasoning, if a man has certain freedoms to create environments compatible to his philosophy, One of Ten Thousand Press seems like a total rejection and flight from the outside world and life itself.

I can assure anyone who sees the studio, there is no attempt to establish a monastery or tea room. I also have no ambition to become a recluse printmaker who is unable to adapt to a studio with a different philosophy. But if an artist has the good fortune to be able to build a studio and has some freedom of choice in its design, it should be conducive to his total development. Considering the choices I had, putting my press in the middle of a factory district would be incongruous to my philosophy. However, for the printmaker who derives his ideas from people and his
energy from activity, the seclusion and outward lack of excitement of One of Ten Thousand Press has no appeal to his nature. So I do not ask you to make a judgment. This is just one of many ways; one environment.

In respect to the actual function of most studios, our efforts are compatible. I can think of few artists who do not consider their studios and homes as a place of seclusion suited to their way of life. The only difference this studio exhibits is a philosophy that is strange to western ways, but the different qualities should not be used to regard the studio as being impractical to the needs and influences of the printmaker.

For the Zen artist, the time spent in zazen, and the meditative mood in his daily activities are the most important part of his life. If we recall the environment conducive to the aims, results, and actual procedures described for zazen, and combine this recollection with that of the Zen attempt to make abstract ideas active, then both the tea room and the studio can be viewed as such a transforming environment. Just as we are advised with zazen to find a quiet place with soft lighting and few distractions, in the tea room everything is meant uniformly to create a meditative frame of mind.¹ The incense burning is gentle and pervading and the light admitted into the room is soft and restful. The paper screen windows diffuse the light giving a unifying affect to all people and objects within the room.²


The tea room is a place of seclusion and selective influences where the participants can relinquish the noise and hurry of their lives. When all is calm and senses are permitted to become more acute, quiet sounds are discernable. At first the sound of the tea kettle becomes more significant, then the hearing extends slowly to the outer gardens. Finally, the breeze passing through the needles of an old pine tree harmoniously blend with the sizzling of the iron kettle over the fire.3

As one looks around the room, nothing is extraneous and without purpose. There is a simple, barren quality that allows each object the dignity and respect it deserves as part of the environment. The emptiness of the enclosure forces the eyes to be selective and concentrated. The mind is free to join this emptiness, and the infinite possibilities of the empty mind through the power of concentration is graphically portrayed. As we see deeper, in spite of its obvious simplicity, the room betrays every mark of thoughtful design.4 The participant can enter harmoniously into everything within and without of the tea room.

To someone who is not aware of Zen teaching, the art of tea seems only like an attempt to heap complex ideals on a very undervailing activity; but if we understand attention to each activity, however mundane, as part of our practice, the tea ceremony asks us to focus on one of these. The same type of respect is shown in archery and swordsmanship, but there seems to be something even

3Ibid., p. 274.

4Ibid., pp. 299-300.
less lofty in drinking a cup of tea. Probably a similar ceremony could have evolved into the "art of washing clothes—or cleaning floors" since these are also ways of true Zen practice, but tea has become the representative. One tea master says: "The art of tea is after all a spiritual discipline, and my aspiration of every hour of the day is not to depart from the spirit of tea..."5 Just as the Zen artist strives to finally "walk while walking" and "edition while editing," entering fully into each moment, so Master Sen no Rikyu, the founder of the tea ceremony, teaches: "The art of cha-no-yu [tea] consists of nothing else but boiling water, making tea, and sipping it."6

The aims of zazen, the tea ceremony, and the Zen artist are no different. The technique is the same: Attention. The ways become one; turn inward in order to turn outward. Have knowledge of ourselves and the insignificant and we will know all.

Without going outside, you may know the whole world. Without looking through the window, you may see the ways of heaven. The further you go, the less you know.

Thus the sage knows without traveling He sees without looking; He works without doing.7

This whole journey is an intense search for life and not a trifling rest from the pressures of our existence. Nothing we have talked about is really meant for enjoyment, or to console people

5Ibid., p. 281.
6Ibid., p. 280.
7Lao Tsu, Tao Te Ching, ed., Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1972), No. 47.
who need reasons to fail in life. It is an escape in that we find a little time to breathe and recuperate, but part of our usual problem, after the mind runs out of energy, is that we have no where else to turn. We all need rest, but we have never become aware of a plan to retreat while working, only calling on the mind when its function is needed.\textsuperscript{8} Zazen seeks inward to that unused power, the tea ceremony symbolizes it, and One of Ten Thousand Press provides an atmosphere for such a journey.

What do we get for our effort? We attain naturalness that allows us to see how we fit into the rhythm of life. The studio and the printmaker are situated along a bay and under a pine tree where both can enjoy the various moods suggested by the snow, the moon, and the trees as they go through the transformation of seasons, appearing and disappearing, blooming and withering. Each screen on the windows is planned to catch the changing light of the day. Each panel forms a different design in relation to the window and the atmosphere of the room is free to be different each hour.

What do we get for our effort? We assume the power to conform as the water does, unaffected by problems and circumstances. We develop a single-minded way that frees us to see each action without discrimination and continue our way unhampered. Lest you think I am getting melodramatic and abstract in building to

my conclusion, let me put a little more Zen practicality into the last page.

The studio is built and designed for practical change. If I may use the example of the window screens again, each screen is either pegged or hinged. The reason is that during cloudy weather when the studio gets darker, all the screens can be removed or opened to meet the demands of the day. To take this example further, at the time this paper is being written, Diane and I are in the process of trying to purchase the house and the garage so we can continue the studio. There is a strong possibility this transaction is unrealistic and we will be forced to move all we have worked for. The windows are not the only furnishings which were designed to include the function of change; the entire studio could be dismantled and moved to a new location during a weekend. The studio sits along a bay now but that is only one of many places it can function.

I have shared a way of printmaking, but it is only one of probably ten thousand open to the beginner.
CONCLUSION

Encouragement and a Caution
In our practice, each print of an edition has a number. It all begins with one of ten thousand.

gasshō
BIBLIOGRAPHY


PORTFOLIO
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Medium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>Watercolor Sketch</td>
<td>12&quot; x 18 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Acrylic on Canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>Watercolor Sketch</td>
<td>13&quot; x 19 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Acrylic on Canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>Watercolor Sketch</td>
<td>10 3/4&quot; x 15 3/4&quot;</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Acrylic on Canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>Watercolor Sketch</td>
<td>16 1/2&quot; x 19 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Acrylic on Canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>Valley Spirit</td>
<td>34 1/4&quot; x 44&quot;</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Acrylic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>Grey Within Grey</td>
<td>25 3/4&quot; x 43&quot;</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Acrylic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>Morning at Sturney</td>
<td>16&quot; x 21 1/4&quot;</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Intaglio - Edition of 10 Rives BFK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>Lying Low in Stillness</td>
<td>16&quot; x 21 1/4&quot;</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Intaglio - Edition of 10 Rives BFK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>Mine is the Morning</td>
<td>14 1/2&quot; x 19 3/4&quot;</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Intaglio - Edition of 5 Rives BFK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Watercolor Sketch

1973
Valley Spirit 1973
Grey Within Grey

1973
Morning at Sturney
Moon-Water

1973
Mine is the Morning

1974