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William Strang: Prints and Drawings

La Salle University Art Museum

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William Strang (1859-1921)

William Strang was born in Dumbarton, Scotland, in 1859. His mother’s family were connected with the shipbuilding trade in Clydeside, and, after graduating from the local school, Strang was apprenticed as a clerk in the family business. However, he early demonstrated his artistic ability and at seventeen was allowed to enter the Slade School of Art in London. There his major teacher came to be the French artist Alphonse Legros, who influenced his choice of media as well as his realistic treatment of social themes.

After his training, Strang taught at the Slade and, while he later took up painting with some success, achieved most of his fame in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century revival of etching.
In addition to his social realism, Strang had an interest in the mysterious, even at times in the macabre; Jacob's "Monkey's Paw" is said to have been his favorite short story. His accomplished draughtsmanship served these interests exceedingly well, as also his foray into book illustration in the 1880's and 90's. In the last effort, he was briefly influenced by Aubrey Beardsley, with whom he collaborated on *Lucien's True History* (1894). But by this time his own reputation was well established, and, while there are echoes of several earlier and contemporary artists in it, his art was never less than honest, direct, and convincingly his own. Over the years, too, his varied experiments continued, especially in drypoint and etched mezzotint.

In a life work of over seven hundred etchings, the portrait prints are particularly compelling. The present small exhibition, drawn from La Salle's own collection, has a number of his portraits of literary figures--Shaw, Hardy, Bridges, Kipling, the last, a close
friend. There are also some of his moving depictions of poor country and city folk, samples of his book illustrations, others of religious themes. In most of these examples, there is evident his gifted but severe style. There is also a compassionate view of humanity in its daily struggles that puts him clearly in the tradition of Rembrandt and Daumier. If Strang refused to adopt the newest styles of his period, French Impressionism especially, he produced work that is distinctive and impressive. It deserves to be remembered and honored, as it has been in several exhibitions recently in London and now here.

Daniel Burke, F.S.C.
Director
CHECK LIST

1. *Anarchy* c. 1894

   Engraving
   Printed by David Strang

   Purchased with funds donated by the Art Angels

2. *George Bernard Shaw* 1907

   Final state
   Drypoint and etching

3. *Rudyard Kipling* 1898

   Final state
   Drypoint

   As an artist, Strang felt a close affinity to his contemporary novelist-friends, Rudyard Kipling and Thomas Hardy. Strang provided etching and aquatint illustrations for Kipling’s *Thirty Short Stories* (1901).
4. *Thomas Hardy, O.M.* 1910
   Drypoint

5. *Robert Bridges* 1898
   Etching
   Printed by David Strang

6. *Farm on the Forth* 1900
   Final state
   Etching
   Printed by David Strang

7. *Mealtime* 1883
   Etching

8. *The Resurrection* 1887
   Etching
9. *Taking the Oath* 1889

   Drypoint

   Purchased with funds donated by David and Joan Souser

10. *Tinkers* 1882

    Etching

11. *The Prodigal Son* 1882

    Etching


    Etching


    Etching

    Printed by David Strang
14. *The Marriage at Cana*  1889
   
   Etching
   
   Printed by David Strang

15. *Descent from the Cross*  1897
   
   vii/vii  Final state
   
   Etching

16. *Sir Henry Layard*
   
   i/iii
   
   Mezzotint
   
   Printed by David Strang

17. *John Masefield*  1912
   
   Final state
   
   Etching
   
   Printed by David Strang
18. Title page to "The Christ Upon the Hill—A Ballad," by Cosmo Monkhouse 1895

Etching

19. The Wine Drinkers

Etching

Purchased with funds donated by the Art Angels

20. Drowned 1890

Illustration for a short story

Etching

21. J. B. Clark

Pen and ink

In 1933 Clark illustrated, with his great friend Strang, The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen.
22. *Death and the Peasant* 1888
   Pencil

   *Death and the Mother* 1888
   Pen and ink

   Preliminary sketches for the etched illustrations for
   *Death and the Ploughman’s Wife*, a ballad composed and
   illustrated by Strang (London: Lawrence and Buller, 1894).

23. *Isaak Walton* 1902
   Illustration for *The Compleat Angler*
   Etching

24. *In Praise of Folly*
   *Done into English by Sir Thomas Challoner*, 1549
   (London: Essex House Press, 1901)
   Woodcut illustrations by William Strang
   Lent by The Robin Collection of Donglomur
25. *The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen*

Illustrated by William Strang and J. B. Clark, with an introduction by Thomas Seccombe

(London: Lawrence and Bull, 1895)

Lent by St. Joseph’s University Library


with sixteen etchings by William Strang

(London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1934)

Lent by Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Library, Wake Forest, North Carolina

27. *Etchings of William Strang, ARA*

by Frank Newbolt

(London and New York: George Newnes Limited and Charles Scribner’s Sons)