

GEORGE ADAMS GALLERY

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Excerpt from a letter to Dennis Adrian, director of the Allan Frumkin Gallery, New York:

Leaf
3 Rue de General Appert
Paris, 16th
France
August, 1959

Dear Dennis –

....To get to the point – you asked me about my work. This last month I worked with color lithography. The damn place is closed in August (everything is) so I worked like a demon on a 3 (maybe 4) color study of a bush. It has a number of stages or proofs which interest me. I will have to wait till September to be sure. It is a little early to tell. I am not totally pleased with the results – but of course that's because the printer couldn't really complete it with me since he is closed in August.

....This month I have made arrangements to work at the Louvre. It's terribly crowded but since the lithographer's closed I thought it would be a good time.

June

It is of great importance that in her first long and intensive involvement with printmaking – a stint of lithography at the Mannequin atelier in Paris – Leaf was working towards the realization of lithographs in three or more colors involving a separate stone for each hue. Her exposure to the splendors of French color lithographs by Lautrec, Vuillard and Bonnard in the marvelous collection of this material in the Print and Drawing Department of the Art Institute, Leaf's Chicago dealer in the 1950s (and for a decade more later) Allan Frumkin, had an especially sympathetic appreciation of this kind of supreme French color lithography and many wonderful examples of it passed through his gallery where they were shown to many artists as well as clients. So, in Paris in 1958 Leaf had a number of good reasons to try her hand and eye in this field: she was sympathetic on many levels to the major practitioners of this kind of print, Paris was the site from which it stemmed and she had reasons to believe her dealer would be supportively interested in what she might achieve.

She began at least seven different compositions, all but one (of fish) studies of leaves, flowers and flowering shrubs she drew from life. Of these largish sheets (most ca. 20 x 26 in.) six reached the stage of some proofs in black or grey, and two of these (Catalogue Raisonne #12 and #13) went to an edition of 30 signed and numbered examples. The three-color composition upon which Leaf concentrated her efforts to realize her ambitions in color lithography (Catalogue Raisonne #15) resulted in many very beautiful trial color variations, each utilizing three stones and an edition of 25. In conjunction with planning the color stages of these projects, Leaf watercolored a few impressions of one or two different compositions: these seem at least in part to have been presentation pieces intended as gifts for friends and therefore should not uncritically be regarded as anticipations of color prints. The unfulfilled nature of some of these color lithographic projects in Paris was due in large part to the artist's limitations of time and money: while it is clear that in order to do color lithography she needed resources of an experienced atelier, such as Mannequin Press was, she did not then have the wherewithal or time to see through all her intentions. Later, in the 1980s, Leaf's color lithography finally gained the professional support and facilities she needed in a series of prints done at Landfall Press in Chicago under the aegis of the master printer Jack Lemon and his expert staff.

Dennis Adrian
The Graphic Work
June Leaf: Prints 1952 – 1990
Chicago Cultural Center, October 21 – December 17, 1995