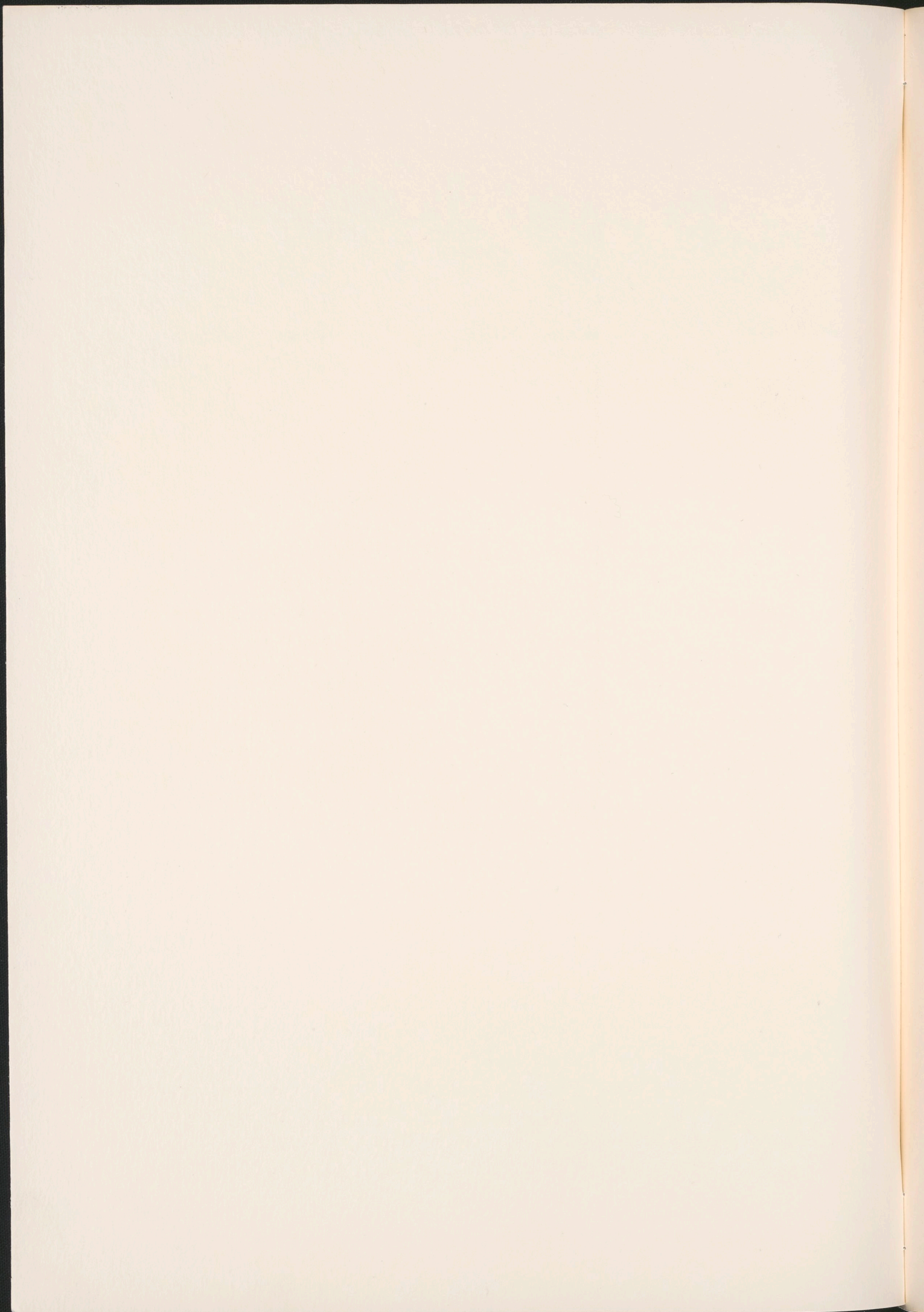


BLOEMART, DAUMIER, GOLTZIUS, GOYA, LEGROS

SELECTED PRINTS

FROM THE W.S. AUBURN COLLECTION

Auckland City Art Gallery
October – December
1982



FREDERICK BLOEMAERT

DR W.S. AUBURN

Walter Auburn was born in Cologne in 1906. He received his schooling at the Friederich Wilhelm Gymnasium, a grammar school which emphasised the classics, Greek and Latin. He studied at several German universities and graduated in medicine from Heidelberg University. He was later appointed to the post of registrar at a large hospital in Berlin.

In March 1933 he was given notice at the hospital as a result of regulations issued by Hitler's Reichskanzler that no 'Fremdstaemmiger' (foreign race) doctor was to be employed. He and his wife, Lore, who was beginning the practical year of her own medical degree, subsequently left with a trainload of Jewish refugees for Holland, and ultimately made their way to Great Britain.

He requalified for his medical degree in Edinburgh with financial assistance from a brother-in-law in America. Not having been able to take money or possessions out of Germany, they were extremely short of funds. After qualifying, he set up a general practice in Manchester. During the war he volunteered for service (three years) in the Royal Medical Corps, and took part in the 'D-Day Plus One' invasion of Normandy.

While he was in the army his wife contracted tuberculosis, and Dr Auburn felt that he and his family should remove themselves from the adverse climate of Manchester. They decided to emigrate to New Zealand - partly on account of his impression of New Zealanders he had met during the war. He gave up his Manchester practice, and they arrived in Auckland in 1948 with meagre funds. Liking the moderate climate of Auckland they settled in Mt Roskill, where he quickly established a prosperous general practice.

Since his childhood he had had an ambition to form a *Kupferstichkabinett* (a collection of engravings and etchings) although he had not dreamed of ever having the means to do so. Around 1956, he discovered he was entitled to a substantial pension from the German government as a result of his

dismissal from the Berlin Hospital in 1933. Now able to realise his ambition he asked Peter Tomory, then the director of the Auckland City Art Gallery, to recommend a print dealer in London whom he might approach to buy on his behalf at London sales and auctions. Tomory suggested Mr Harold Wright, head of the Department of Old Master Prints at the firm P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., Bond Street.

Between 1956 and his death in 1979, Dr Auburn acquired extensive collections of etchings by Wenzel Hollar (1607-1677), Jacques Callot (1592/3-1635), Stefano della Bella (1610-1664) and Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778). These collections, which are administered by the Mackelvie trust, were placed in safekeeping at the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1981. In the same year, the Auckland City Council purchased from his estate the bulk of another collection of old master and modern prints by diverse artists including Albrecht Dürer, Rembrandt van Rijn, Honore Daumier, Simone Cantarini, Giovanni Grimaldi and Alphonse Legros. The two collections are identified as the Auburn Bequest and the Auburn Collection respectively. Together, they constitute the single most important acquisition of prints in the history of this Gallery, and one of the most significant collections of its type in the Southern Hemisphere.

He was a dedicated and highly respected doctor. In 1967 he established the Auckland University Health Service, where he worked as a general practitioner for five years until his retirement. Thereafter he worked at the North Shore Teachers Training College and the Psychiatric Outpatients Ward at Auckland Hospital.

He had a great love for the arts, both old and new, and a special respect for the creative imagination. In 1960 he was appointed Honorary Print Consultant to the Auckland City Art Gallery. In 1967 he founded, with Kees Hos, the New Zealand Print Council. From 1957 he was a member of the Auckland Gallery Associates and for many years was patron of that organisation. Over the years he played an active role in a number of exhibitions, either prepared by or shown at the Auckland City Art Gallery, and often on such occasions lent significant numbers of works from his own collections. From time to time his generosity led him to gift works to the Art Gallery; the most recent of which, not long before his death, was the set of six plates of *The Harlot's Progress* by William Hogarth.

FREDERICK BLOEMAERT

The second son of the Dutch painter and engraver, Abraham Bloemaert, Frederick was an accomplished engraver like his brother Cornelis. The secondson of four (Adriaan and Hendrik were painters), he was born in Utrecht in 1610. He learnt engraving from his father and was chiefly occupied with engraving his designs. He produced a large number of plates among which his principal work was a drawing book containing 173 plates from designs by his father. He also made a number of plates which combined etching with chiaroscuro wood-block. His subjects are mainly religious, allegorical, and landscapes. He died in 1668.

HONORE DAUMIER

A French painter and graphic artist with a deep concern for the political and social developments of his times, Daumier produced more than four thousand lithographs for newspapers and more than a thousand wood engravings for books and newspapers. He was born in Marseilles in 1808. His father was a framemaker with literary ambitions. In 1816 the family settled in Paris where Daumier senior gained some success with a tragedy and a volume of verse. Unable to support his family, however, he sent his son out to work at the age of twelve.

Daumier started work as a bailiff's assistant and then moved on to a bookshop. Finally the painter and archaeologist Lenoir took him under his protection. He introduced Daumier to the lithographer and portrait artist, Zephyrin Belliard, who gave him a thorough grounding in the technique. At the age of fourteen he made a lithograph to earn some extra money, but his great career as a lithographic artist did not begin until the rise of Louis-Philippe.

Between 1832 and 1837 he drew, on average, two illustrations a week for Paris newspapers. Although he made numerous caricatures of the bourgeoisie, his fiercest attacks were aimed at the monarchy, the legal profession and clericalism. The paper he produced most of his lithographs for was

Le Charivari, which consisted of three pages of text and one lithograph in each issue. If a print was successful further copies were printed on white paper. He worked predominantly on heavy limestones and at his most prolific could draw eight lithographs in an evening.

In 1832 Daumier was sentenced to six months imprisonment for satirising Louis-Philippe. His term of imprisonment, from August 1832 to January 1833, made him famous, and he was courted by pressmen and heroes of the Resistance. In 1835 censorship was imposed and La Caricature, a satirical weekly paper for which Daumier also produced lithographs, ceased publication. Le Charivari continued publication but Daumier had to refrain from political caricature. Instead he took to drawing the daily life about him, caricaturing the complacent middle classes.

The period 1848 to 1852 saw the Second Republic. Daumier took up painting, which was his true passion. He was given several important state commissions but the canvases he exhibited at the Salons of 1849 and 1850 were not very successful. After the fall of the Second Republic, in 1851, Daumier invented the character 'Ratapoil', the leader of a strong arm brigade who instilled fear in the populace with their indiscriminate violence and arch patriotism. With the reintroduction of censorship, Ratapoil went 'underground'. Daumier tried, unsuccessfully, to live off his paintings and drawings when his contract with Le Charivari was terminated in 1860.

In 1863 his contract was renewed, his paintings began to sell, and in 1868 censorship was lifted again. Although conditions were relatively liberal the country was heading for disaster owing to the disintegration of Louis Napoleon's foreign policy. In 1870 the Franco-Prussian War broke out. In the wake of the event Daumier produced some of his most powerful prints.

In 1872 he gave up working for Le Charivari on account of an eye illness. In 1878 a retrospective exhibition of his work was held at the Durand-Ruel art gallery. This included 94 paintings as well as watercolours, prints and clay figures. He died in 1879.

HENDRICK GOLTZIUS

The greatest virtuoso engraver of all time, Goltzius was a child prodigy. He was born in Mulbrecht in Holland in 1558. His father, who was a glass painter, taught him the first principles of drawing. He then learnt engraving under Dirck Coornhaert whom he soon surpassed. After engraving a number of plates for his master and for Philippe Galle, he travelled through Germany to Italy where he studied the works of Michelangelo, Raphael and Caravaggio.

Technically he was unrivalled. His execution is extremely neat and highly finished, with sinuous lines seemingly effortlessly executed. He was a master of the human anatomy and drew the extremities with great precision.

During his residence in Rome he executed a number of plates after Raphael and Caravaggio and on his return to Holland made a number of plates after such Northern masters as Dürer and Lucas van Leyden. In particular he produced a set of six engravings called The Masterpieces of Goltzius, not because they are his best productions but because they demonstrate how perfectly he could copy the manner of an artist whose works was held in greater esteem than his own. Besides such plates he also produced a great number of original designs which are, in fact, his best works. He turned his hand to wood engraving at one stage and produced a number of chiaroscuro woodcuts which are some of the finest works in the medium.

At the age of 42 he began painting. His first picture represented the Crucifixion with the Virgin Mary and St John. Some of his paintings, which are not very numerous, are in the Imperial Collection in Vienna. He is, however, best known by his engravings which are numerous - some 5000 or more plates in all.

GOYA

Goya - the "Beethoven of painting" - was born in 1746 near Saragossa in Spain. At seventeen, he gained a scholarship to study painting in Madrid where he worked in the studio of the painter Bayeu. At twenty he left

for Italy where he remained for four years, although none of the great Masters of the Renaissance nor works of antiquity appear to have left much mark on his work. In 1771 he won second prize in a painting competition at Palma with the subject, "The victorious Hannibal looks down from an alpine peak on to the Italian Plains for the first time". Soon afterwards he returned to Saragossa where he painted a series of large frescoes. A few years later he settled in Madrid where he produced forty-five designs for tapestries between 1776 and 1791. These works are characterised by a brilliance of colour and general gaiety which recalls Tiepolo, who worked in Madrid between 1762 and 1770.

The success of his tapestry designs gained him an introduction to the Spanish court where he was entrusted with a commission to engrave a series of plates after paintings by Velasquez in the Royal collection. In addition to the seventeen engravings he painted several copies of Velasquez. In 1781 he painted the first of his court portraits which were a great success.

In 1792 he experienced a long and almost fatal illness which left him weak in health and completely deaf. As a result of this illness his personality underwent a morbid transformation which is reflected in the paintings he produced shortly afterwards, such as Procession of the Flagellants, The Burial of the Sardine, and The Madhouse. The grotesque masks worn by the dancing figures in The Burial of the Sardine are a device that he used again and again in the paintings and prints of his late years, to sinister effect.

In 1797 he published a series of etchings entitled Caprices, which ridicule the priesthood, superstitions and the human folly. A number of these plates are inhabited by ghosts, witches and sorcerers. The prevailing tone of the Caprices is one of soured moralism, and disgust with the vanity and cruelty of human existence. The titles of the plates are epigrammatic and cutting, for example : How they pluck her, See the result, They cannot help it, People do not know themselves.

His next series of etchings, begun in 1811 but not published till 1863, was The Disasters of War with the theme of war turning men into beasts. Perhaps the most horrific of all depictions of war in art, the 'Disasters'

etchings (85 plates) chronicle such grizzly horrors as rape, torture, hanging, castration, infanticide and mass executions, perpetrated during the Franco-Prussian War which culminated in the tragic winter of 1811. Although Napoleon's invasion of Spain was the *raison d'être* for this vivid record of horror the theme is much broader - man's inhumanity to man.

Goya's third series of etchings was the Bullfights (43 plates) in which he described the origins of the sport and some celebrated events in the ring. In 1817 he fell ill again. He soon recovered and, just as he had after his first illness, launched himself into a new series of etchings, Proverbs, characterised by bizarre visions and phantasmagoric creatures. Many of these plates cannot be interpreted clearly and their precise meaning, if indeed Goya intended one, may always remain obscure. Others, as their title suggests, are clearly proverbial.

Goya continued to paint throughout his life. His skill as a portrait painter was unparalleled but his most challenging works of his later years are those paintings which relate most closely to his phantasmagoric prints. His palette became progressively darker and his style more vigorous and sparse. Ghoulish hooded old men eating soup, the gargantuan figure of Colossus dominating the skyline above a small village, Saturn devouring his children, a witches sabbath - these are some of the nightmarish subjects which characterise his late work.

Among these images two paintings, The Naked Maja and The Maja Clothed stand out as markedly different, in the same way that the radiant body of Truth in the etching Truth has died is contrasted with the ghoulish faces that crowd about her. In 1819 he made his first experiments in lithography and, in 1824, he executed a series of lithographs including the four masterpieces Bulls of Bordeaux. He died in that province of France where he had lived the remainder of his years, in 1828, at the age of eighty-two.

ALPHONSE LEGROS

Legros was born in Dijon in France in 1837, the youngest child of a poor family. He worked with an interior decorator then in 1851 went to Paris where he worked under C.A. Lambon, the scene painter. He studied in the atelier of Lecoq de Basbaudran and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts until 1855. He first exhibited at the Salon of 1857. He joined the circle of Courbet around 1859 and made friendships with Fantin Latour, Manet and Whistler. He took part in the first Salon des Refuses in 1863. Owing to lack of success he decided, in the same year, to settle in London. He exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1864 and also at the Grosvenor and New Galleries. In 1875 he was put in charge of the etching class at The Royal College in South Kensington. He also taught at the Slade School, and in 1876 was appointed professor, a post he held until 1892. As a teacher he exerted a strong traditional influence, aiming at simplicity rather than overstatement.

His importance as an etcher lay principally in his revival of portraiture which, since the days of Van Dyck, had been in eclipse. His etchings with figure subjects were inspired by his contact with and respect for peasant life. It has been conjectured that in such subjects he was influenced by Goya whose work he must have become familiar with from several visits he made to Spain after 1860.

He etched a number of church themes which, perhaps because of their somewhat depressing yet undramatic quality, are his least appreciated works. He also etched a number of landscapes and skilfully exploited the technique of drypoint to suggest a soft hazy light filtering through foliage. In the best of these works a mood of great stillness and softness prevails. In some of the landscape prints, however, his treatment of trees degenerates into a simple 'old master' formula, and the works suffer on this account.

The considerable number of states of some of his plates attests to his search for perfection, something he approached in only a few plates.

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Legros was a prolific etcher - the collector Frank Bliss catalogued 704 etchings - and he also painted a number of oils - portraits, landscape and studies of the poor. He eventually became a naturalised Englishman and for some time lived at Watford. He died in 1911.

