

The Prints and Drawings of Cecile Gray Bazelon

Cecile Gray had arrived at Syracuse with a strong arts background, in part, because of her adolescent years growing up in Cleveland, Ohio. Always supportive of her creative interests, her parents gave her private lessons in art and dance, and brought her to the Cleveland Museum of Art on a regular basis. She remembers that as a child she had a love of impressionist paintings, especially the paintings of Degas that displayed dancers in various poses. "They were so charming and as a child taking dance, I could see myself in them." The German Expressionists and the energy they demonstrated when making their prints also fascinated Cecile. It truly impressed her that a line cut in wood could display such passion. This appreciation of the graphic line would have a great impact on her. When asked about her attraction to the museum and its art, Cecile remarked, "I practically lived there. I really enjoyed looking at the paintings and reading about the artists." These experiences brought her back to the museum on a regular basis.

Cecile was also very interested in literature and writing, a major reason for her selecting Syracuse for her college education. Not many Universities at the time allowed students to enroll in multi-disciplinary studies; for Cecile, art and literature were very important and Syracuse allowed her to concentrate in both areas. She graduated in 1949 and received a prestigious award from the Art School, the Hiram Gee Fellowship. This award would have enabled her to visit Europe and its wealth of important art but her mother's poor health forced her to return to Cleveland and it took several more years before she would be able to travel through Europe. When she did get there its impact was no less significant.

In the mid 1950s Cecile moved to New York City and was working as a publicist. The move to the city and her active work scheduled made it difficult for Cecile to paint so she turned her attention to making woodcuts and by 1957 had completed a number of ambitious images.

Cecile abandoned printmaking in the 1970s in favor of developing her painting skills and exploring a strong desire to investigate other issues in art. In many ways these woodcuts force us to ask the question- What if Cecile had combined what she learned from printmaking and painting- where would her curious mind have taken us?