

Discovering Hidden Beauty

by **Jean K. Carman**

with Bev Polzin, Australia Yearly Meeting Secretary

I first met Jean Carman in Brisbane last September, as she was celebrating her 90th birthday; one of her ways of celebrating was to take a journey in a hot air balloon. I think it was in her eighties that she took up playing the harp when her eyesight was failing!

Jean is certainly seen here as the pioneer in extracting dyes from eucalypts. I think she may have been in her 60s when she started this. Her husband, a chemist, gave her some hints about how to conduct such experiments.

She was profiled in a book published last year called Friends of the Forest, a Queensland publication. Jean says that Brooklyn Botanic Gardens library has a copy of her book, Dye-making with Eucalypts.

Jean Carman is a member of Queensland Regional Meeting.

—Bev Polzin

During 1968 my husband and I came to Brisbane to live. I tried to find a church which would give me the same friendship and spiritual support that I had received from the church that we attended in Victoria. A few years later a friend took me to a meeting for worship at the Religious Society of Friends. There I felt a sense of freedom and a peaceful atmosphere in which I could think through my problems. I happily accepted the Quaker way of living and I took part in street marches and rallies for peace.

I quietly carried on with my research with the eucalypt dyes and I completed the diploma of Visual Arts at the Kelvin Grove College of Adult Education.

Eucalypts are native to Australia, Papua/New Guinea and islands north. Dyes are extracted mainly from the leaves. I have used the wood and the bark and the flowers, too, which always give shades of red. It is a color range similar to what the aboriginal people have shown in their dyes. The colors range from red to grey to black, but the colors are basically the colors of the earth.

I have used the dyes in pictures, screen printing, block printing, tie-dyeing. I began with dyeing wool, which I used for knitting and weaving. Later I extended it to dyeing cotton and silk (silk has been particularly beautiful.) I have used the traditional 'mordants' to give a greater range of color.

In 1991 I was offered the AM Award, member of the General Division of the Order of Australia, for Service to the Arts through the study of natural eucalypt dyes, and to the community. [BP: This is an Australian government award to honor people who have excelled in some way in the civilian sphere; it is seen as *very* prestigious.]

I received a letter from an old friend in which she said that she had been asked to write a letter of recommendation for me to receive an Award. She had written the letter but in it she stated that she did not think I would accept the Award as I was a Quaker, as Quakers did not accept such awards. I don't think that earlier Quakers would ever accept an honor for anything one had done, especially an award for something in the arts, which was not considered of serious value. There is a general non-valuing of the arts among Quakers.

For a time I felt like rejecting the Award. But during the years that I had spent extracting the natural dyes from 300 different species of eucalypts, I had build up a kind of spiritual relationship with them. I was discovering the hidden beauty, something new and beautiful about them. This I called "the Hidden Beauty of Australia. Later I began to apply that idea to other things in the world around me and to the people living in it.

So I accepted the Award, feeling that in so doing I was honouring the eucalypts. But there were other Quakers who did not agree with me.

That was the beginning of my drift away from Quakers. The world of colour, beauty, music, art, drama and the spoken word became more important to me. In it I found my real self. In a world of like-minded people I was able to develop skills and creativity by taking part in these activities. My God is with me in these gifts the world has given to me and these gifts have assisted me in my journey towards blindness.

I have hardly ever used the Award, but at Kerry Holland's Portrait Exhibition, I am proudly and thankfully allowing "AM" to be placed beside my name under her portrait of me done with paints made from the eucalypt dyes.

From the foundation of Quakers, members have been deeply concerned with social problems, victims of persecution, poverty and injustice. Even now when they are more liberal in their thinking, I have felt the distinction. Quakers are now accepting awards, but still only for social involvement.

But I now have support for my belief about the value of the arts. For some time music has been taught as a therapy in the universities. Other branches of the arts are being used as avenues of healing in many mental and nerve-related illnesses. Painting, sculpture, pottery and other crafts are very valuable right through to old age. All these activities help in the healing of the body and mind. I must also include beauty, colour and the gift of laughter. There is also the imagery and the inspiration of the spoken word.

As my body has aged and my sight diminished, I am experiencing the value of these God-given gifts in my journey towards blindness, especially colour and music.

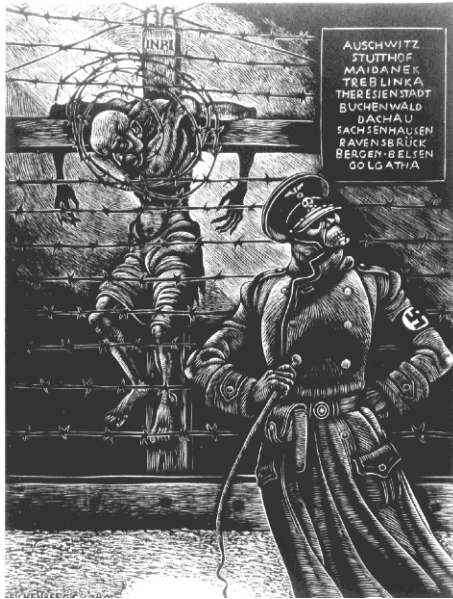
Types & Shadows is published quarterly by the Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts. Subscriptions are available through membership in the FQA.

This page added June 2002

Fritz Eichenberg: Witness to the Twentieth Century

by Terry Hammond

Director and Curator, Guilford College Art Gallery



The Guilford College Art Gallery's opening exhibition for the fall season is *Witness to the 20th Century: The Artistic Biography of Fritz Eichenberg*. This engaging exhibition chronicles the life and career of Fritz Eichenberg, artist, printmaker, teacher, author, social activist, and Quaker, whose life bore witness to the political, military, and social follies of the past century. *Witness to the 20th Century*, the first comprehensive presentation produced with the cooperation of the Fritz Eichenberg Trust, contains previously unexhibited works from the artist's personal collection, as well as other pieces on loan from museums and private collectors.

As the title "Witness to the 20th Century" indicates, Fritz Eichenberg observed and commented on many of the pivotal events of the past century, including both World Wars, Weimar Germany, and post-war social activism. Born in 1901, as a young child living in Germany during World War I, Eichenberg endured the nightly bombing raids sustained by his industrial city of

Cologne. It was during this time that he realized his desire to become "an artist with a message," and examine the human condition through caricature. Eichenberg noted in his autobiography, "'During the last days of the war I used to go up to the roof of our house to pick up shrapnel souvenirs from the night's bombing raids. Undernourished, as we all were, I collapsed one morning in front of Dr. Fritz Witte's door. He was a famous art historian, priest and curator of the Schn• tgen Museum of Religious Art." Dr. Witte, after discovering Eichenberg's artistic desires, gave him a book that contained works by Francisco Goya, Honoré Daumier, William Hogarth, and other artists who commented upon their milieu. For the young Eichenberg, this provided the impetus and encouragement that he needed to begin pursuing his career.

After an apprenticeship at a printing shop, where Eichenberg learned the basics of lithography, he began designing advertisements for a department store. During this time, he continued to sketch his surroundings and capture the essential elements of a situation through sharp observation, infused with great empathy for his subjects. Desiring to further his artistic training, Eichenberg enrolled in the Academy of Graphic Arts in Leipzig and found a mentor in Professor Hugo Steiner-Prag. His professor, a central figure in 20th-century European book illustration, introduced the art of book illustration to Eichenberg. Encouraged by his teacher, Eichenberg resolved to become a successful book illustrator in order to support himself and express his social conscience.

For ten years, Eichenberg lived and worked in Weimar Berlin, creating illustrations for Ullstein's magazines, newspaper, and books. His biting images for the satirical magazine *UHU* mocked the political and military elite, including the ever-growing Nazi Party. As the political and economic situation of Weimar Germany spiraled downward after the worldwide economic depression of 1929, and the National Socialist party gained strength, Eichenberg looked toward the future with great foreboding. By March of 1933, with Hitler and the National Socialists in control of Germany, Eichenberg planned a business trip to the Americas under the pretext of drawing illustrations of the United States, Mexico, and South American countries for German publications; however, feeling uneasy about the situation in Germany, Eichenberg was searching for a new and safe home for his wife and child. Upon his return with numerous sketches, he arranged for a second trip to the United States late in 1933; however, this time he planned to bring his family and not return to Germany. Soon after the Eichenbergs arrived in New York, the editors at Ullstein, now under the control of the Nazi party, fired him from his position. In order to support himself in his new country, Eichenberg turned to teaching.

Eichenberg began teaching wood engraving at the New School for Social Research, and creating images for the Federal Arts Project and *The Nation*. During this period he developed contacts within the publishing industry and once again began illustrating books. During the next years of his career, he received a consistent stream of projects for illustrating major works of literature, including books by Shakespeare, the Brontë sisters, Swift, Poe, and the classics of Russian literature, including *War and Peace*, *Fathers and Sons*, *Anna Karenina*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*.

He found that book illustration was a suitable medium for his personality, as he found literature to be a means for personal escape. Eichenberg brought his own intense identification with the author and the characters to his illustrations, thus his images opened a new world for the reader's understanding of a text. Already established as a successful and prosperous commercial illustrator of literature, in 1949 when he met the Christian social justice activist Dorothy Day, he began a parallel career as an illustrator of religious images for Day's newspaper *The Catholic Worker*.

Eichenberg became a member of the Religious Society of Friends in 1940, shortly after the sudden death of his first wife. He wrote and illustrated two pamphlets, *Art and Faith* (1952) and *Artist on the Witness Stand* (1984), for the Quaker-affiliated press, Pendle Hill Publications. It is perhaps his religious images that provide a glimpse of the persona to which Eichenberg aspired, and were most personally rewarding.

Types & Shadows is published quarterly by the Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts. Subscriptions are available through membership in the FQA.

This page added June 2002