In 1555, two sophisticated colour-printed woodcuts were published after the designs of the Netherlandish artist Frans Floris de Vriendt: David Playing the Harp before King Saul (Fig. 13.1), recorded in numerous impressions,1 and the Hunts (Fig. 13.2), a monumental and extremely rare print, which was nearly unprecedented in scale and ambition.2 They bear Floris’s signature as inventor, and another dozen remarkable colour prints have been associated with his designs.3 Floris’s brief engagement with colour woodcuts coincided with another significant colour printing project: the medallion-like portraits included in Hubert Goltzius’s magisterial account of Roman emperors. Published in Antwerp by Gillis Coppens van Diest in 1557, the volume’s title advertised the use of painterly colour in its illustrations: Vivae Omnium fere Imperatorum Imagines…suis coloribus historico penicillo delineate (Images of nearly all the Emperors…painted in their colours with a historic brush).4 Yet while Floris and Goltzius produced art for the same audience and were united by a deep admiration for their teacher Lambert Lombard of Liège, the striking similarities between their colour printing projects have hitherto received little attention. This study examines Floris’s and Goltzius’s colour prints within the context of a nascent discourse on the graphic arts in the North. It analyses Floris’s early attraction to the properties of colour woodblock printing, addressing the question of why the production of colour prints after his designs ceased nearly as suddenly as it began. The paper argues that Floris’s and Goltzius’s approaches to this novel technique reveal the shifting views of their humanist audience about the possibilities and potential limitations of using colour printing to celebrate the visual heritage of the classical past.5

Appropriating the Objective Value of Coins

Hubert Goltzius, a peripatetic artist, humanist and entrepreneur, occasionally sold and produced paintings.6 His Last Judgment (1557) shows a close affinity to Floris’s painted oeuvre.7 Yet he is best known for his volumes on the life of Caesar and his numismatic treatises, for which he won the title of Civis Romanus from the Roman Senate.8 In the preface to the Imperatorum Imagines, his first major treatise, Goltzius explained that he discovered

1 Woodcut from four blocks, 336 x 482 mm; E. Wouk, Frans Floris, ed. G. Luijten, 2 vols., NH-DF (Ouderkerk aan den Ijssel: Sound and Vision, 2010), 1:2, no. 1.
2 Woodcut from three blocks in six parts, 431 x 2625 mm, as mounted together; Ibid., 2:18, no. 9.
3 Ibid., 1: 6–16, nos. 2–8; 2: 225–25, nos. Rii-2: Cornelis Anthonisz’s Last Supper was attributed erroneously to Floris; see, for example, J. Renouvier, Des types et des manières des maîtres graveurs: pour servir à l’histoire de la gravure en Italie, en Allemagne, dans les Pays-Bas et en France, 4 vols. (Montpellier: Boehm, 1853–56), 2:151.
5 For the use of colour printmaking to celebrate classical heritage in seventeenth-century France, see A. Dencher, ‘The “Camaieu” Print’, this volume, 80–86.
numismatics during his time with Lombard, ‘the patron and reformer of sciences in these lands, who chased away the barbarian customs and restored to these regions the true science [of art]’. In 1565, he set aside other projects to edit Dominicus Lampsonius’s *Vita... Lamberti Lombardi*, a panegyric on Lombard that celebrates his vast learning, his role in educating a generation of Netherlandish artists and his early championing of printmaking in the North.

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