In the final chapter of his seminal work *Traicté des manieres de graver en taille douce sur l’airin* (1645), the printmaker and theoretician Abraham Bosse discussed several ‘curiosités’ of printing techniques, including multi-tonal etchings published by the artist François Perrier in 1633 (Fig. 16.1). He praised these ‘figures of which the outlines and hatching were printed in black and the highlights in white, just like cameos’, which were so new and beautiful that ‘I was compelled to research their invention’, before discussing their techniques, inks and paper. Although an important print industry was concentrated in Paris and Lyon, French printmakers produced only a small number of multi-tonal prints until the early eighteenth century. His assessment effectively summarised the situation of the French multi-tonal print in the early 1630s.

Bosse used the term ‘camaïeu’ to indicate prints whose tonal effect (but not necessarily palette) imitate that of carved gems or cameos, generally with one or two tone plates (in intaglio) or tone blocks (i.e. woodcuts) printed in a limited tonal range of any one colour. Perrier, who combined one plate for the design in black (the key plate) with another for highlights in white on grey-brown paper that provided the intermediary tone, was a notable producer of these etchings. Their pictorial effects and restrained tonal range recall an earlier set of colour woodcuts designed by the painter Georges Lallemand (Figs. 16.3, 16.4), cut by the German artist Ludolph Büssinck and

---


The ‘Camaïeu’ Print in Seventeenth-Century Paris

In fact, all of the multi-tonal prints created in Paris during the first half of the seventeenth century could be termed camaïeu prints by this definition, which implies that the style may have developed as an artistic strategy specific to local printmakers. This is also suggested by the almost simultaneous appearance of woodcuts and etchings that conform to Bosse’s definition of the camaïeu style in Paris during the late 1620s and early 1630s. A history of the origins and developments of colour printing in early seventeenth-century France must not only reconsider the works of Lallemand and Perrier but also the roles played by the German blockcutter Büsinck and the Flemish print publisher Tavernier. If the Traicté demonstrates the desire of printmakers like Bosse to develop and renew the medium of intaglio printmaking, demonstrated by his own attempts to (virtually) recreate the effects of Perrier’s works (Fig. 16.5), its text simultaneously alludes to problems faced by contemporary Parisian printmakers eager to integrate colour into prints mechanically.

Abraham Bosse, Colour and Prints in Seventeenth-century France

The Traicté is the principal source of information on the status of colour in French intaglio print production during the early decades of the seventeenth century. However, as the supposed novelty of camaïeu intaglio printmaking shows, Bosse ignores important and relevant aspects of