

Paul Landacre

WOOD ENGRAVINGS

CATHERINE BURNS FINE ART



Cover Illustration:

The Press, 1934. Wien 155 iv/iv. Wood engraving.
8 ¼ x 8 ¼" ; 21 x 21 cm.

This wood engraving depicts the 19th-century Washington hand press that Landacre found abandoned and lovingly restored for use as his personal press. It is now in the collection of the [International Printing Museum](#) in Carson, California.

CATHERINE BURNS FINE ART

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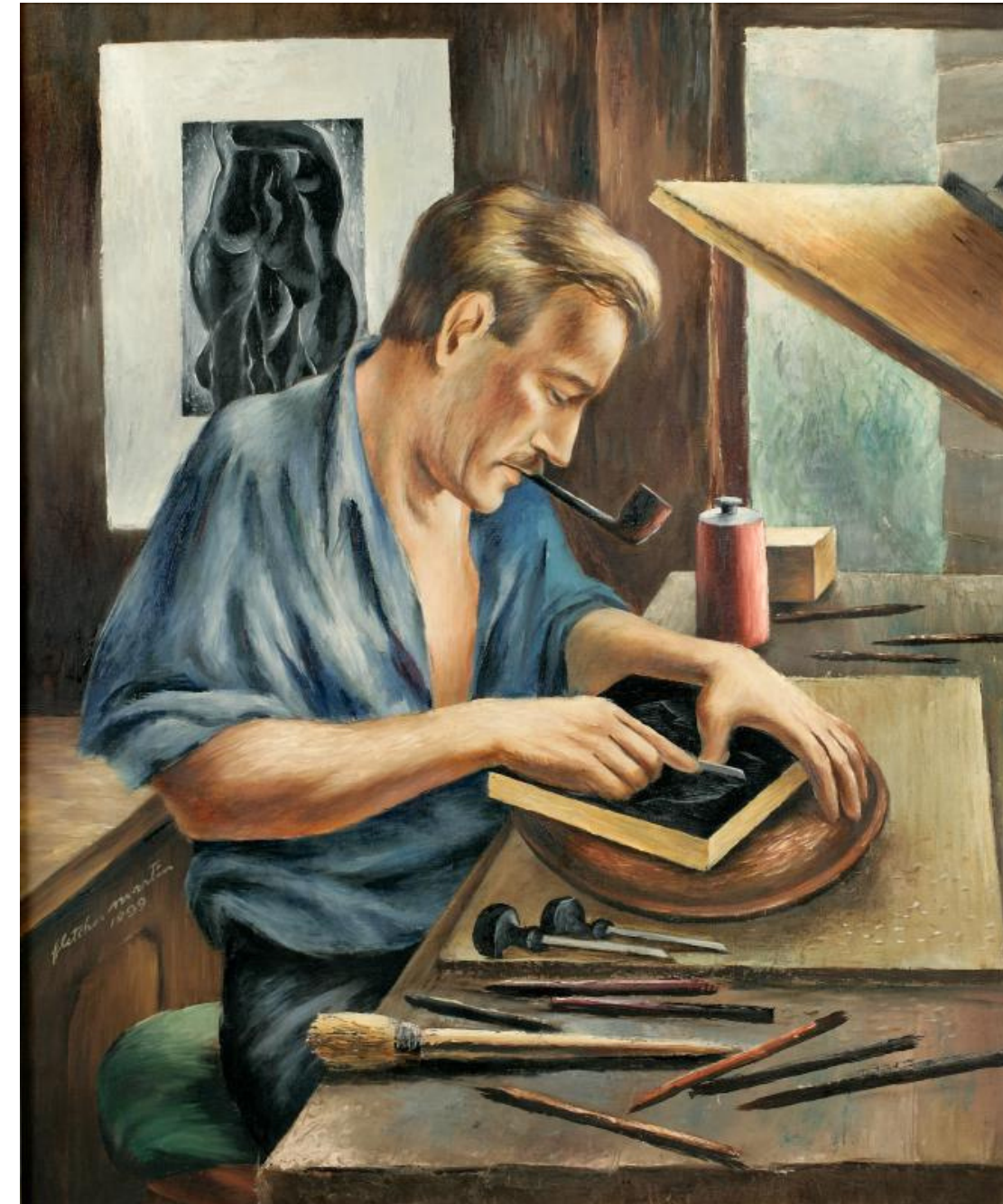
NOTES

1. All works of art are for sale except those marked NFS. Price list is available upon request.
2. Prints are in fine condition unless otherwise noted. Measurements of the engraved image are given in inches and centimeters, height before width.
3. Prints will be sent on approval to museums and individuals known to me or to those supplying references. Firm orders take priority. Items not purchased to be returned within ten days.

PAUL LANDACRE (1893-1963)

Paul Landacre was a virtuoso wood engraver with a singular technique and a modern, precisionist approach. During his lifetime, he was considered by art critics and artists, such as Rockwell Kent, as the finest American wood engraver of his time, and this reverence holds up today. Enchanted by southern California landscape, flora and fauna, the artist is most renowned for depicting the rolling hills, deserts, beaches, and dramatic fires and storms around Los Angeles.

Born in 1893 in Columbus, Ohio, Landacre attended Ohio State University, where he was an aspiring athlete and botanist. Hit by a debilitating streptococcus infection, he moved to southern California in 1916 to convalesce and pursue a less strenuous profession. Several years later, he attended classes at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. He taught himself the exacting technique of wood engraving, which was experiencing an international revival of interest as an artistic medium but was not a subject taught in L.A. art schools. His first important exhibition was held in Los Angeles in 1930 at the Zeitlin bookstore, which represented him and his estate for 45 years and introduced him to a wide circle of local artists, actors, intellectuals, and literary talents.



Paul Landacre, by Fletcher Martin, 1939
Oil on canvas. National Academy, New York.

The artist's early wood engravings were composed with sweeping, parallel lines to describe the sensuous curves of a hillside or a nude figure. By the early to mid-1930s, he had refined his technique to a highly personal method of precise, meticulous cutting and fine crosshatching. Progressing even further beyond traditional woodcutting methods and towards greater abstraction, he used a multitude of different strokes of the burin to create sinuous lines and subtle textures and patterns. The striking clarity and beauty of his compositions, which contrast brilliant whites with velvety deep blacks, endowed his prints with a modernity that was unusual in other American or European wood engravings of the period.

Landacre's sales of wood engravings were supplemented by commercial work in book illustration, but the Depression years created financial hardships. A small group of generous friends organized the Paul Landacre Association, and subscribers paid \$100 per year to receive a new Landacre print each month. During a three-year period, these collectors received such treasures as *The Press*, *Counterpoint*, *The Shell*, and *Hill*.

Landacre intended the editions of many of his early prints to be 50 or 60, and occasionally, when there was popular demand for a particular print, he began a second edition. But due to the demanding task of printing and lack of demand, his editions were usually incomplete.

Moreover, he customarily signed his prints only upon sale. Landacre would single out a particularly fine impression in the edition by drawing a petrel bird in red pencil in the lower margin. Impressions remaining in his studio after his untimely death in 1963, sometimes unsigned, often bear an estate stamp of a petrel cipher and on the verso, a stamp of Origins of Art, the gallery that inventoried the estate. Apart from a few larger published editions, he pulled all of his wood engravings on a 19th-century Washington Hand Press, which he restored after it was found in an abandoned newspaper office. He preferred a soft, fibrous, white, or thin beige Japanese paper, which better absorbed the thick black ink.

Landacre's prints are represented in the collections of most major museums, including the [Smithsonian American Art Museum](#), [New York Museum of Modern Art](#), [Philadelphia Museum of Art](#), [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#), [Boston Museum of Fine Arts](#), and the [Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts](#). Anthony Lehman's biography, entitled *Paul Landacre: A Life and a Legacy*, was published in 1983. A catalogue raisonné of his prints, authored by Jake Wien, will be available in 2024.



1. *Growing Corn*, 1938

Wien 209 ii/ii. Wood engraving on wove japanese paper, full margins. Signed in pencil.

Rare first edition of 60 (according to Wien, there were 59 signed impressions in the first edition and 7 in the second). 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " ; 22.2 x 11.4 cm.

"Inspired by the prior season's resplendent corn crop grown in his backyard and elsewhere on the Hill, Landacre sketched and then engraved *Growing Corn*, perhaps the most widely exhibited of his prints. Many of Landacre's American contemporaries during the Great Depression, including Georgia O'Keeffe, John Stuart Curry, and Gustave Baumann, paid homage to the majestic corn stalk as a vital and symbolic source of nourishment for man and beast." (Wien)

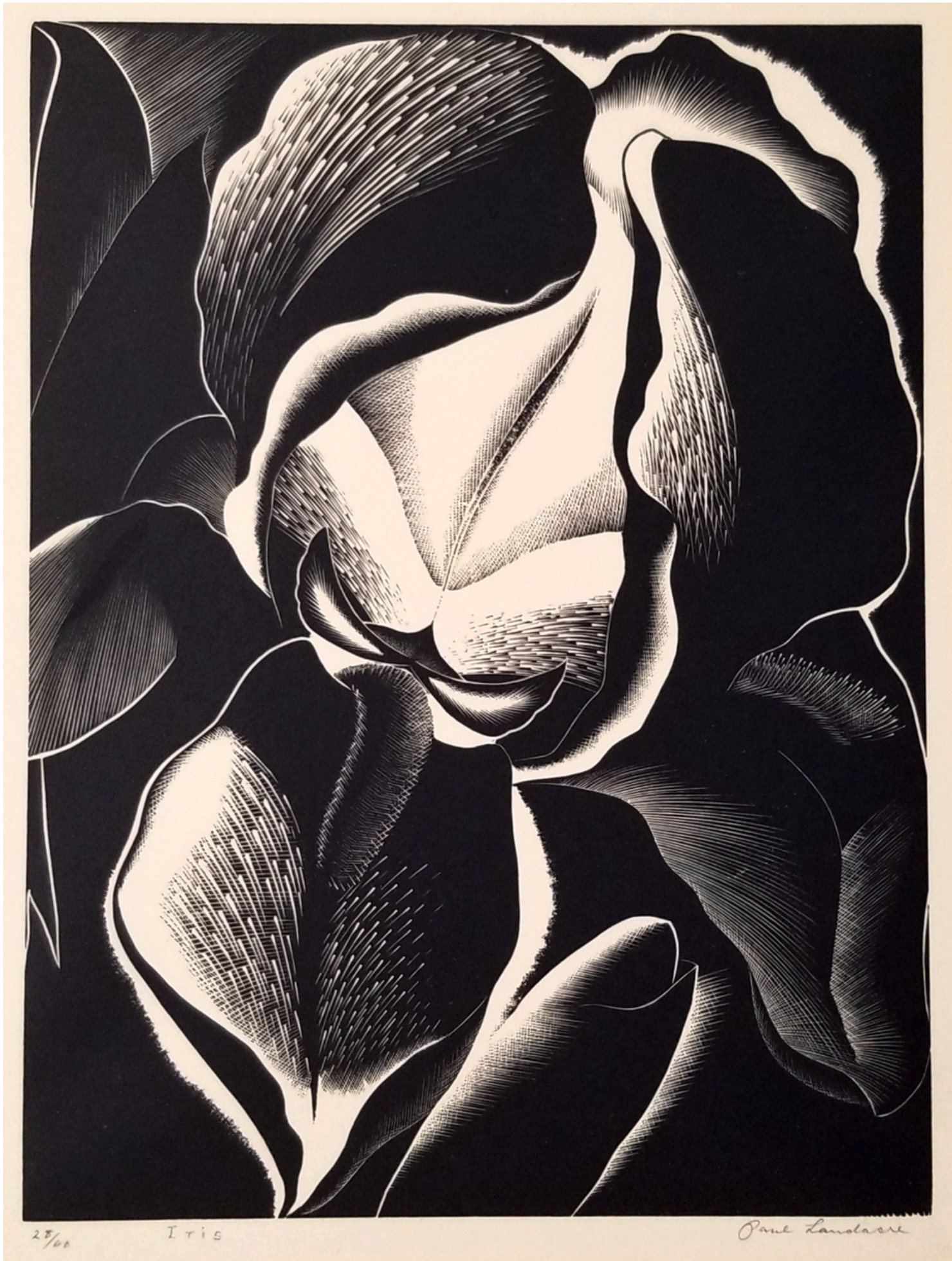
2. Preparatory drawing

Graphite on cream wove paper watermarked *Reliable*, removed from a sketchbook with a perforated left edge.

Sheet: 9 $\frac{15}{16}$ x 7 $\frac{7}{16}$ " ; 25.2 x 19.9 cm. NFS

Courtesy of Claire de Heeckeren d'Anthès





3. *Iris*, 1934

Wien 150 iii/iii. Wood engraving on wove paper with full margins. One of only 34 signed impressions. Rare. Signed, titled, and numbered 28/60 in pencil. 8 x 6" ; 20.3 x 15.2 cm.

Iris was one of the wood engravings presented to the Paul Landacre Association, whose subscribers paid \$100 per year to receive a new Landacre print each month. There is a lovely graphite and charcoal preparatory drawing for the print at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.



4. *Nimbus*, 1934

Wien 149 vi/vi. Wood engraving on laid Japanese paper, full margins.

One of 17 signed impressions from the second, incomplete edition of 150 (there was also an edition of 60). Very rare. Signed, titled and numbered 22/60 in pencil. 5 ¼ x 7 ½" ; 13.3 x 19.1 cm.

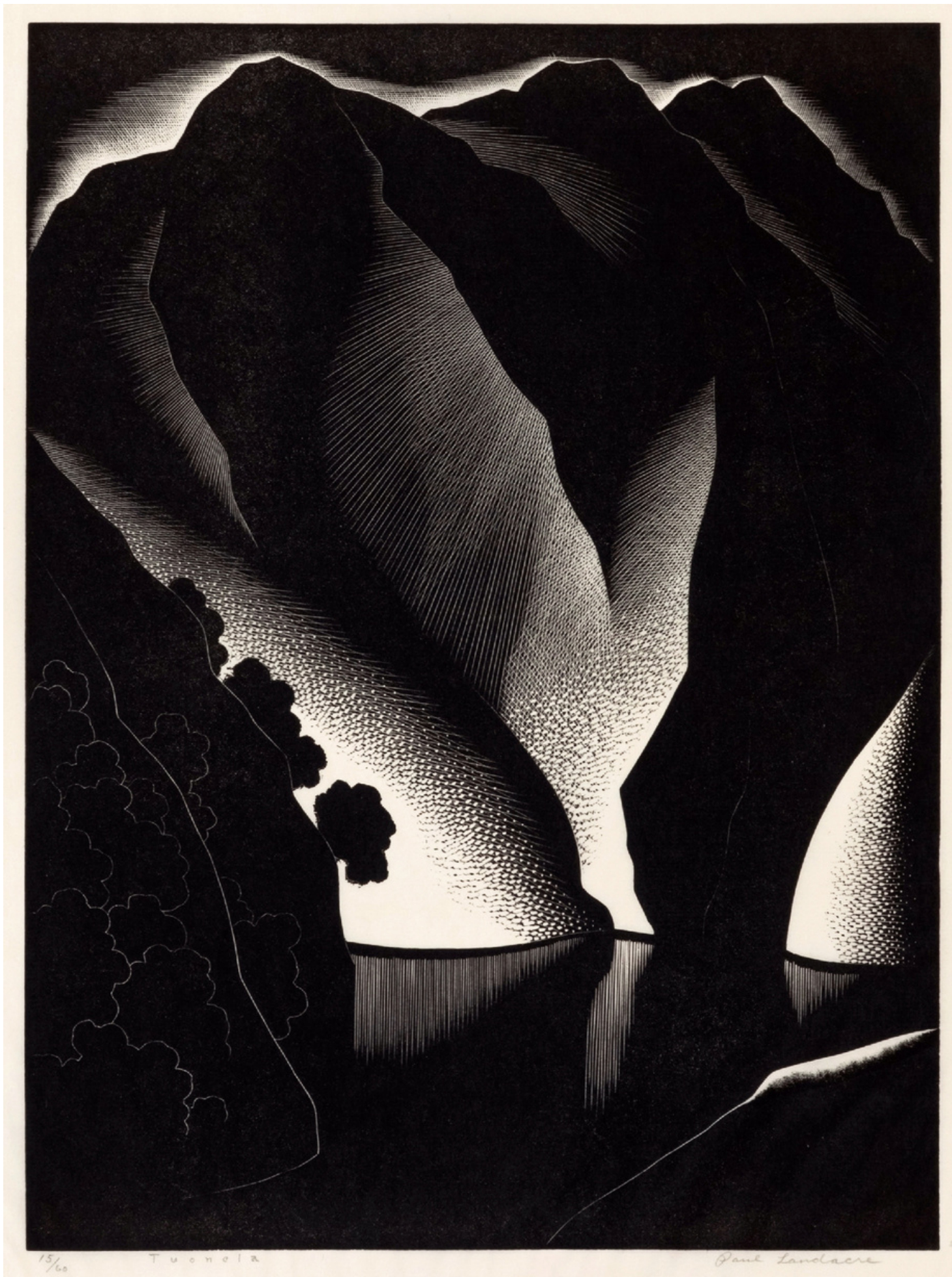
This dazzling wood engraving depicts clouds over the Sierra Madre mountains in southern California. As in several of Landacre's landscapes, the undulating hills resemble a female form and evoke the fertility of the land.



5. *Coachella Valley*,
1936

Wien 180 ii/ii. Wood engraving on wove paper, full margins. One of 19 signed impressions in the second incomplete edition. Signed, titled, and numbered II 25/150 in pencil. 6 x 12 $\frac{3}{16}$ " ; 15 x 31 cm.

Coachella Valley is an arid basin bordered by the San Bernadino Mountains, largely unpopulated until the 1930s when Palm Springs became a hot spot for Hollywood celebrities. At first glance an ordinary landscape, this remarkable wood engraving with its masterful use of stippling and crosshatching features a train and its long trail of smoke.

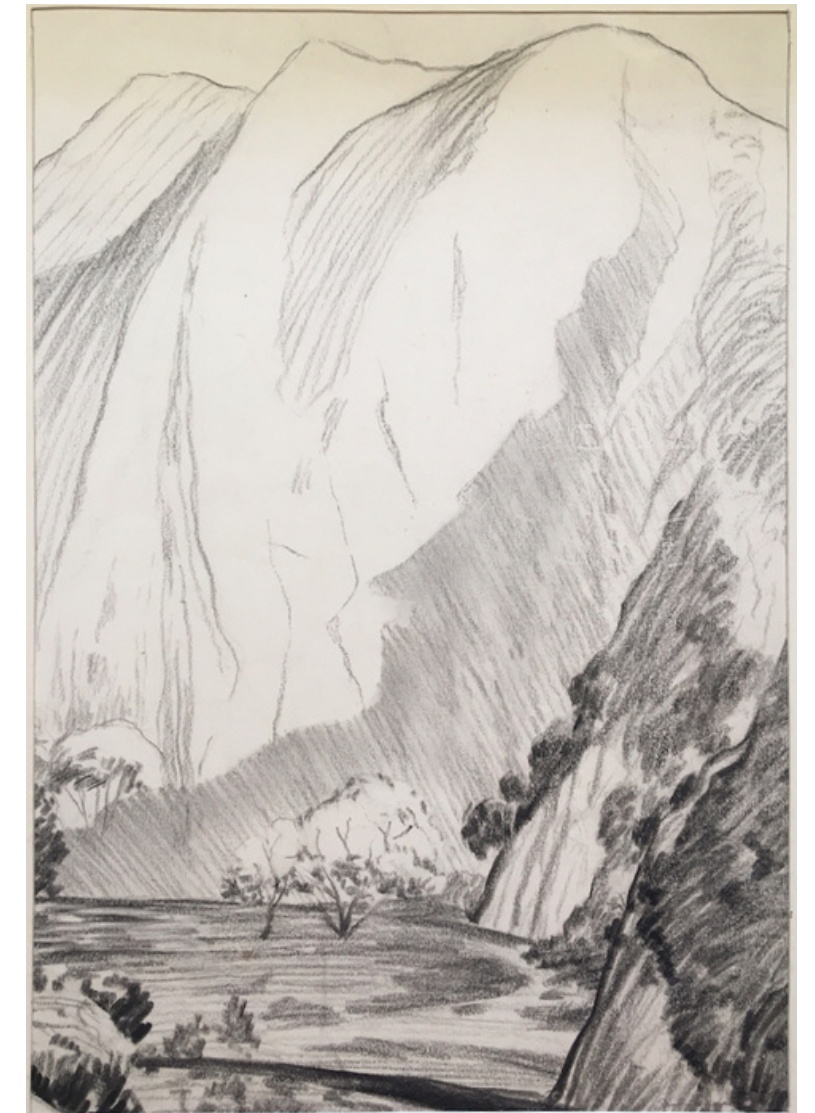


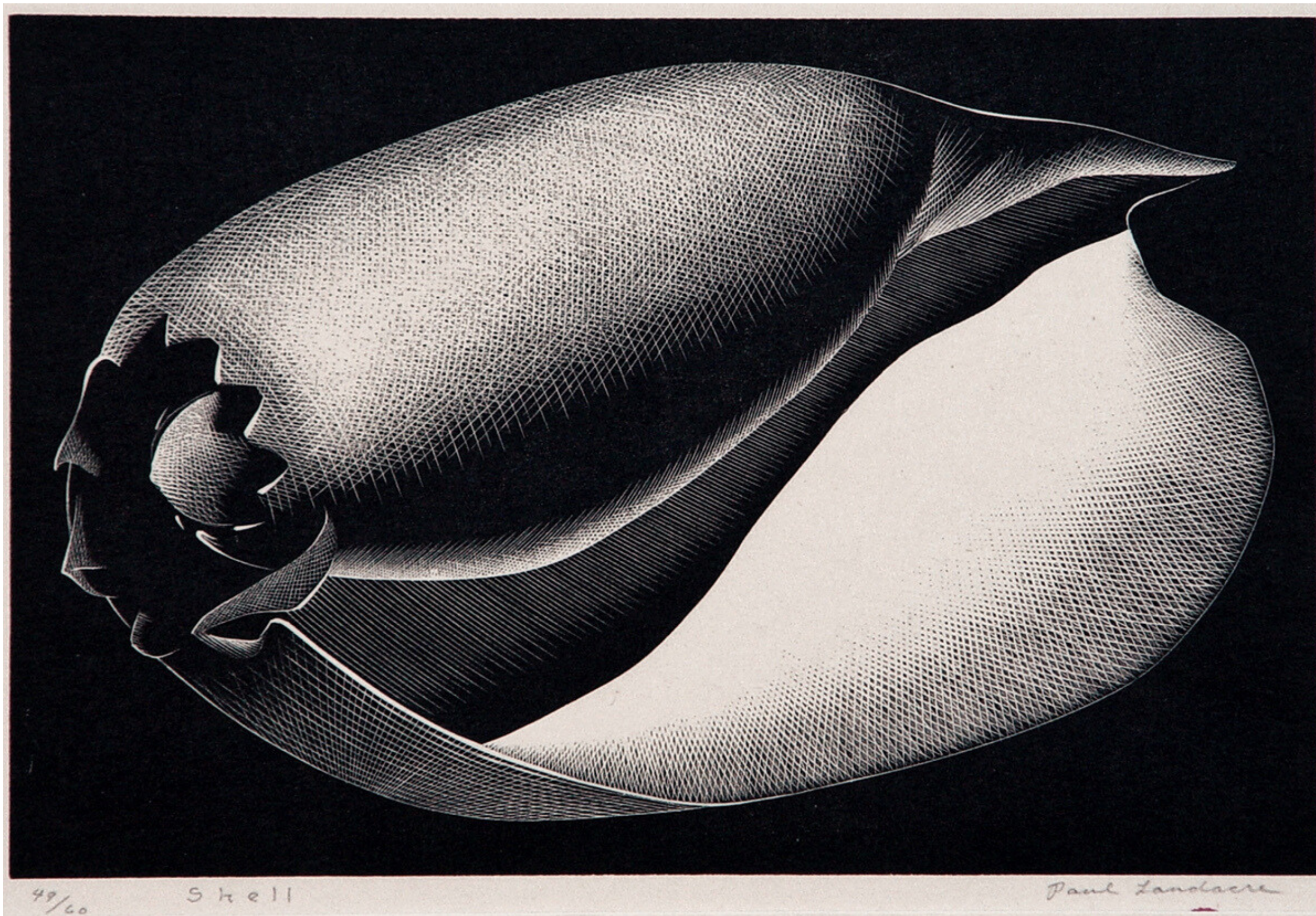
6. *Tuonela*, 1934

Wien 152 iii/iii. Wood engraving on laid Japanese paper, full margins. First edition of 60 from the second block. Signed, titled, and numbered 15/60 in pencil. 10 ¼ x 7 ½" ; 26 x 19 cm.

Landacre created a second wood engraving of *Tuonela*, perhaps due to a cracked block or his dissatisfaction with the first one. In this second version he sought to refine, reduce, and distill the purity of the California landscape. He eliminated the shading on the trees, water reflections, and details in the mountains, visible in the first block.

The wood engraving is based on a drawing (illus.) Landacre made of a southern California landscape, but for the artist, it evoked the mood of a musical composition, 'The Swan of Tuonela' by Finland's Jan Sibelius. The fictional Tuonela, from a Finnish mythological poem, is guarded by a swan in "a large river of black waters." Landacre sent an impression of *Tuonela* to Sibelius, along with a portrait wood engraving of the composer, who responded, "They are beautiful and interesting things and I especially like the one called 'Tuonela', which expresses so much."





7. *Shell*, 1935

Wien 160 iii/iii. Wood engraving printed on wove japanese paper, full margins. One of 54 in the rare first edition (there were also 10 signed in a second edition). Rare. Signed, titled, and numbered 48/60 in pencil.

4 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ " ; 11.75 x 20 cm.

The organic, sensual forms and dramatic contrast of dark and light attest to the mutual influence of the photographer Edward Weston and the painter Henrietta Shore. The three artists were part of a vibrant artistic and literary circle in Los Angeles in the 1930s.



10/60 Sultry Day

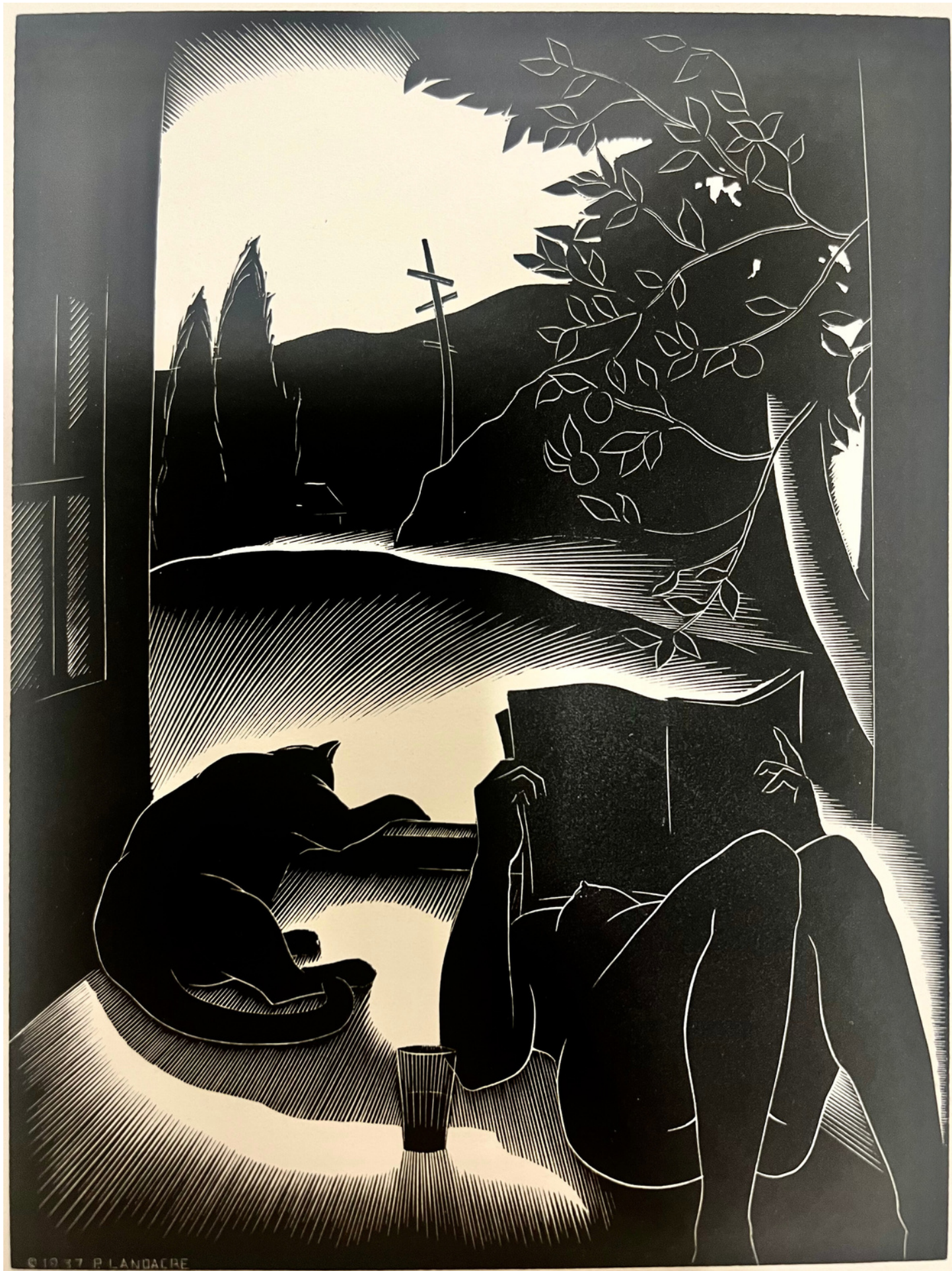
Paul Landacre

8. *Sultry Day*, 1935

Wien 170 i/ii. Wood engraving on laid Japanese paper, full margins. From the very rare signed first edition of 60 (there were also 7 signed impressions before the unsigned published edition of ca. 200). Signed, titled and numbered 10/60 in pencil.

8 x 6" ; 20.3 x 15.2 cm.

Sultry Day features Margaret, the artist's wife, and their Maltese cat Smoky, relaxing in the seclusion of their Los Angeles hillside home and garden.



9. *Sultry Day*, 1935

Wien 170 ii/ii. Edition of ca. 200 published by the *American Artists Group*, New York, 1937. Wood engraving on wove paper with partial watermark, full margins. With the four-page presentation folio. 8 x 6" ; 20.3 x 15.2 cm.



10. Preparatory drawing

Graphite on cream wove paper.
7 7/8 x 6" ; 20.1 x 15.4 cm.
NFS

Courtesy of Jake Milgram Wien, *Paul Landacre: California Hills and Beyond. A Catalogue Raisonné of the Prints, Drawings, and Paintings* (forthcoming).



11. *Death of a Forest*, 1937

Wien 204 iii/iii. Wood engraving on wove japanese paper, full margins. One of 53 signed impressions from an incomplete edition of 60. Very rare. Signed, titled and numbered 3/60 in pencil.

8 ¼ x 11" ; 20.96 x 27.94 cm.

Death of a Forest is one of Landacre's most beautiful prints with its dramatic contrasts of black and white. The subject of a raging wildfire is poignant in our time of global warming.

12. *Death of a Forest*, 1937

Wien 204 i/iii, before additional highlights were added to the foreground and sky. Wood engraving on wove japanese paper, full margins. Trial proof printed by the artist, before the edition of 60 (of which 53 were signed). Very rare. Inscribed "Trial I" in red pencil by the artist and with the original Art stamp verso. 8 ¼ x 11" ; 20.96 x 27.94 cm. (not pictured)



32/60

S t o r m

Jane Landacre

13. *Storm*, 1934

Wien 156 iii/iii. Wood engraving on laid Japanese paper, full margins. First edition of 60 (there were also 15 signed impressions in a second edition). Signed, titled, and numbered 32/60 in pencil. A petrel bird drawn in red pencil by the artist in the lower margin indicates a fine impression. Origins of Art stamp verso.

8 x 10 ¼" ; 20.32 x 26.04 cm.

Landacre was fascinated with dramatic weather and other natural phenomenon. *Storm* reflects his move towards greater abstraction than his earlier, more traditional California landscapes. He has incorporated various natural elements: rain, clouds, a lake, a windblown tree, and a mountain ridge. The beautiful curve of a tree merges with the sunlit ridge of a mountain, forming a diagonal that extends to the upper left of the composition. In *Storm*, Landacre was not aiming to reproduce a specific location, and instead, he reduced the composition to organic, sinuous forms, which are sensitively rendered with his meticulous woodcutting technique.

14. *Counterpoint*, 1938

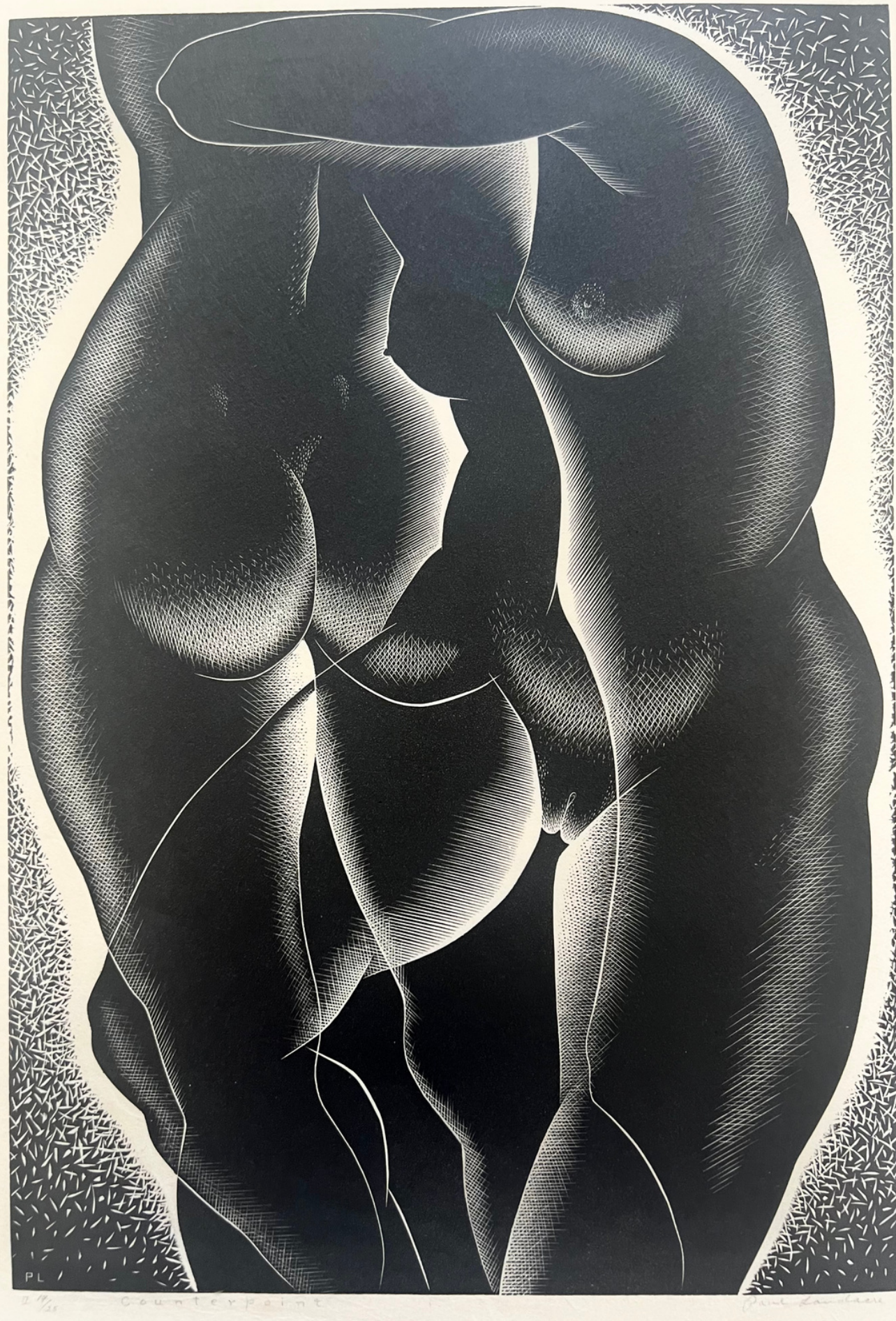
Wien 216 iv/iv. Wood engraving on laid Japanese paper. One of 22 signed impressions in the second edition of 25 (the total edition of signed impressions was 53 in three editions). Signed, titled, and numbered II 14/25 in pencil. 12 x 8 ¼" ; 30.5 x 21 cm.

Counterpoint was based on several drawings of female nudes which Landacre superimposed in the final preparatory drawing (illus.15). True to the medium, the figures are reversed in the wood engraving and the dark areas in the drawing appear as white lines in the print. Perhaps Landacre was inspired by the medium of photography when multiple exposures are overlaid in a photograph, as suggested by Wien in his forthcoming catalogue raisonné.

15. Preparatory drawing

Graphite drawing on paper. 13 ⅜ x 9" ; 34 x 22.9 cm. NFS

Courtesy of The William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles





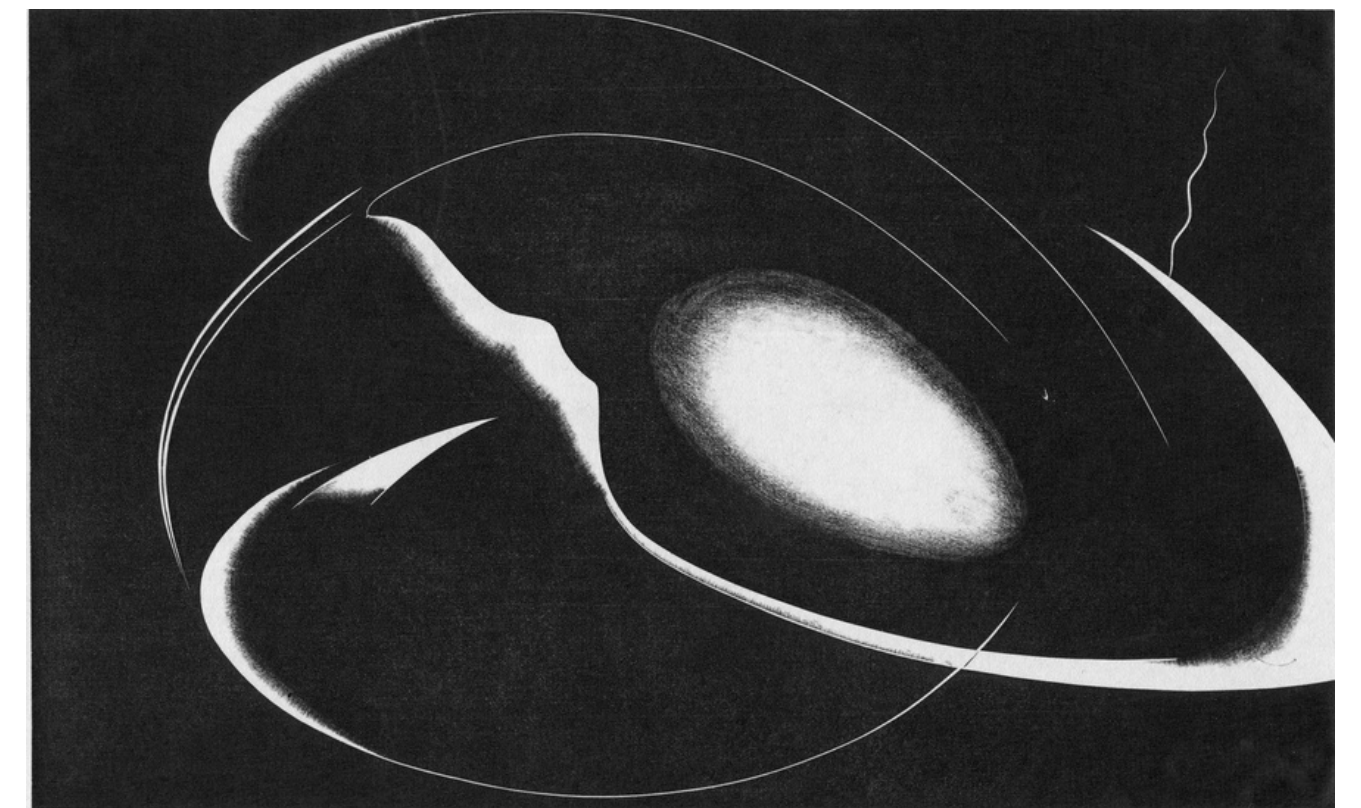
16. *Allegro*, 1938

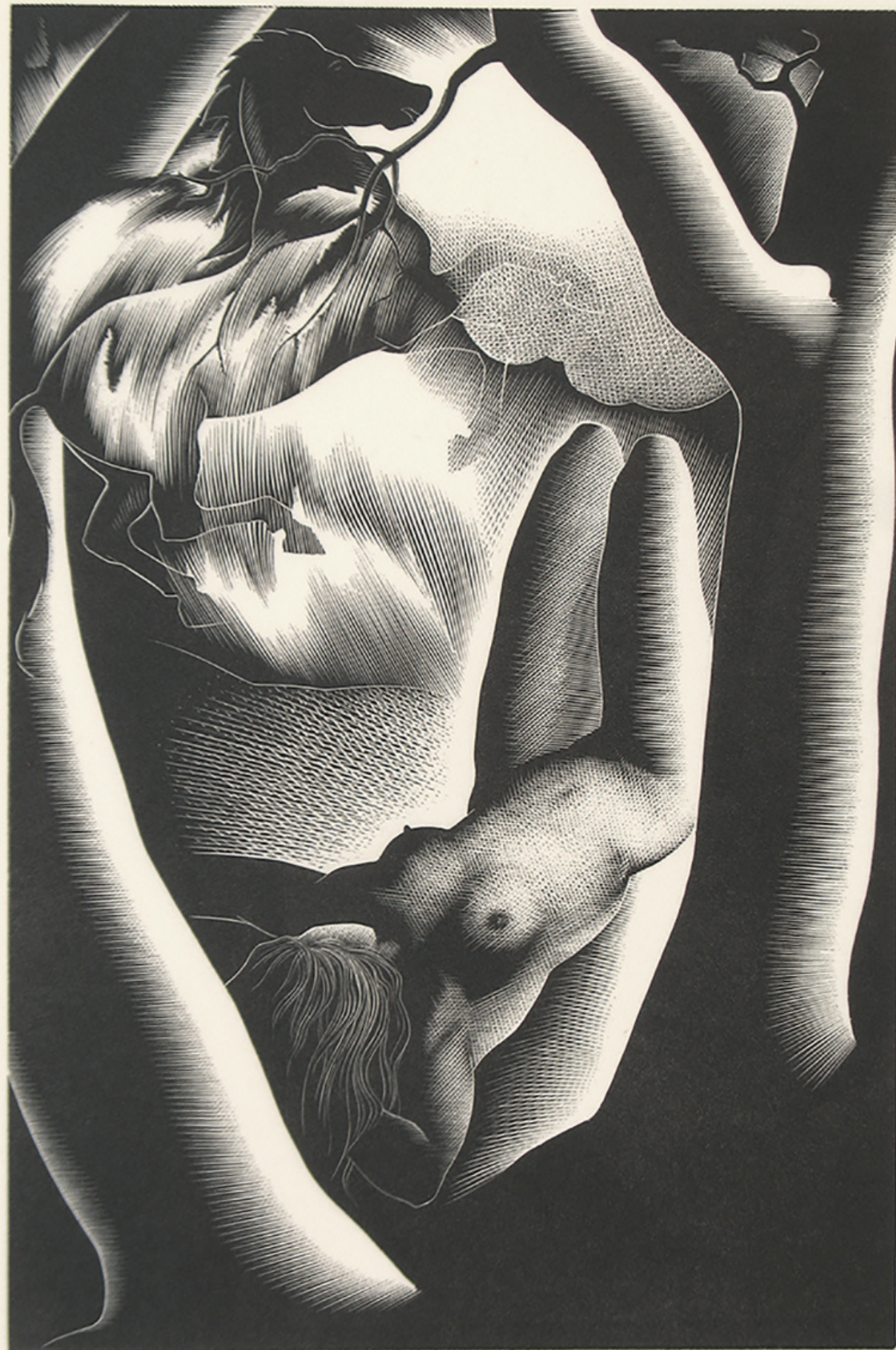
Wien 215 ii/ii. Wood engraving on wove Japanese paper, full margins. Edition of 60 (but only 45 were printed). Very rare. Signed, titled and numbered in pencil.
6 x 9 7/8" ; 15.2 x 25.1 cm.

17. First state of *Allegro*

Wood engraving on thin Japanese laid paper.
10 5/8 x 13 1/2" ; 27 x 34.3
NFS

Courtesy of Jake Milgram Wien, *Paul Landacre: California Hills and Beyond. A Catalogue Raisonné of the Prints, Drawings, and Paintings* (forthcoming)





33/60 Yesterday Paul Landacre

18. *Yesterday*, 1940

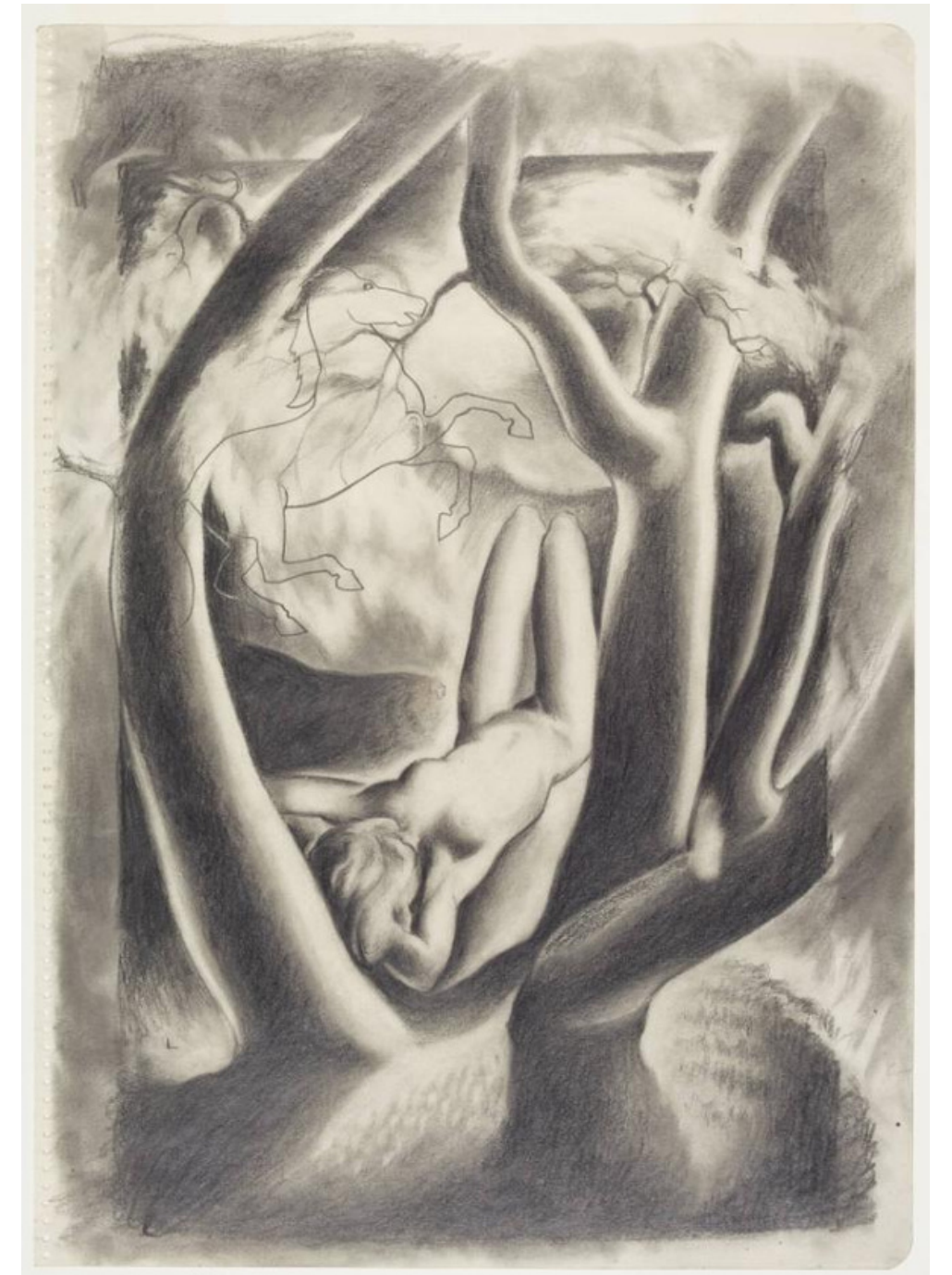
Wien 237 ii/ii. Wood engraving on wove
japanese paper, full margins. Edition of 60.
Signed, titled and numbered 33/60 in pencil.
9 ³/₈ x 6 ¹/₄" ; 23.81 x 15.88 cm.

Yesterday was commissioned, but not used,
by the Woodcut Society of Kansas City.
Partway through engraving the woodblock
Landacre realized that, contrary to the
Society's request for something other than
landscape, *Yesterday* "had more landscape
than figure". Landacre completed the wood
engraving *Black Stallion* for the Woodcut
Society instead. A similar stallion was
incorporated into this print, adding meaning to
the nude woman in a dreamlike state (Wien).

19. Preparatory drawing

Graphite drawing on off-white wove paper.
14 ¹/₈ x 10" ; 35.9 x 25.4 cm. NFS

Image © The Worcester Art Museum, Anonymous
Gift





20. *Hills and the Sea, Malibu Coast, 1930-31*

Wien 90, only state. Wood engraving on wove paper, full margins. Edition of 50 (only 43 were signed). Signed, titled, and numbered 35/50 in pencil. Red petrel stamp lower right and Origins of Art stamp verso.

5 7/8 x 7 7/8" ; 14.9 x 20 cm.



21. *Hills and the Sea, Malibu Coast, 1930*

Charcoal drawing on wove paper, watermarked WARREN'S OLDE STYLE, on a full sheet. The only known preparatory drawing for the wood engraving of the same title (illus. 20). Dated "8-25-30", and titled "Hills and the Sea Malibu Coast Prelim. Sketch for Wood Eng." in pencil.

6 1/8 x 10 5/8" ; 15.6 x 27 cm.

The wood engraving was one of 15 included in the 1931 bound folio, *California Hills and other Wood Engravings*, published in an unsigned edition. Signed proofs are rare.



22. *Desert Storm*, 1932

Wien 108, only state. Wood engraving on cream wove paper, full margins, in the original mat. One of only 22 signed impressions and one unsigned, from the incomplete edition of 50. Signed, titled and numbered 6/50 in pencil, petrel stamp lower right and Origins of Art stamp verso.

5 ¹⁵/₁₆ x 7 ¹⁵/₁₆ " ; 15.1 x 20.2 cm.

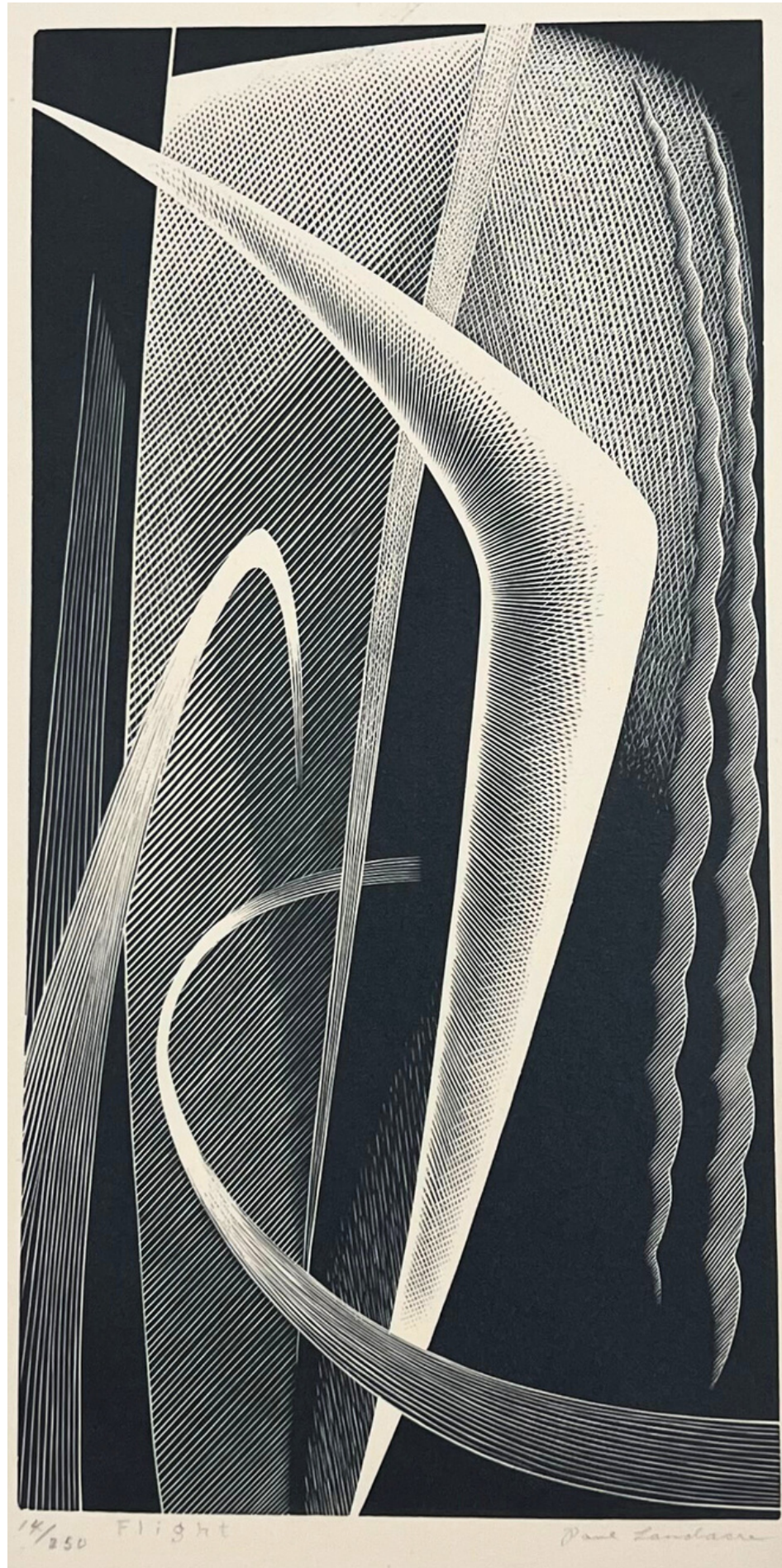
Desert Storm is very rare because the block cracked after 23 impressions were pulled.



23. *Baldy (or From Campus Window)*, 1932

Wien 106 i/ii. Wood engraving on cream wove paper.
One of 15 in the first state (there were also 9 signed and unnumbered impressions in the second state). Signed and numbered 14/15 in pencil. Petrel stamp lower margin and Origins of Art stamp verso.
3 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ " ; 8.6 x 10.5 cm.

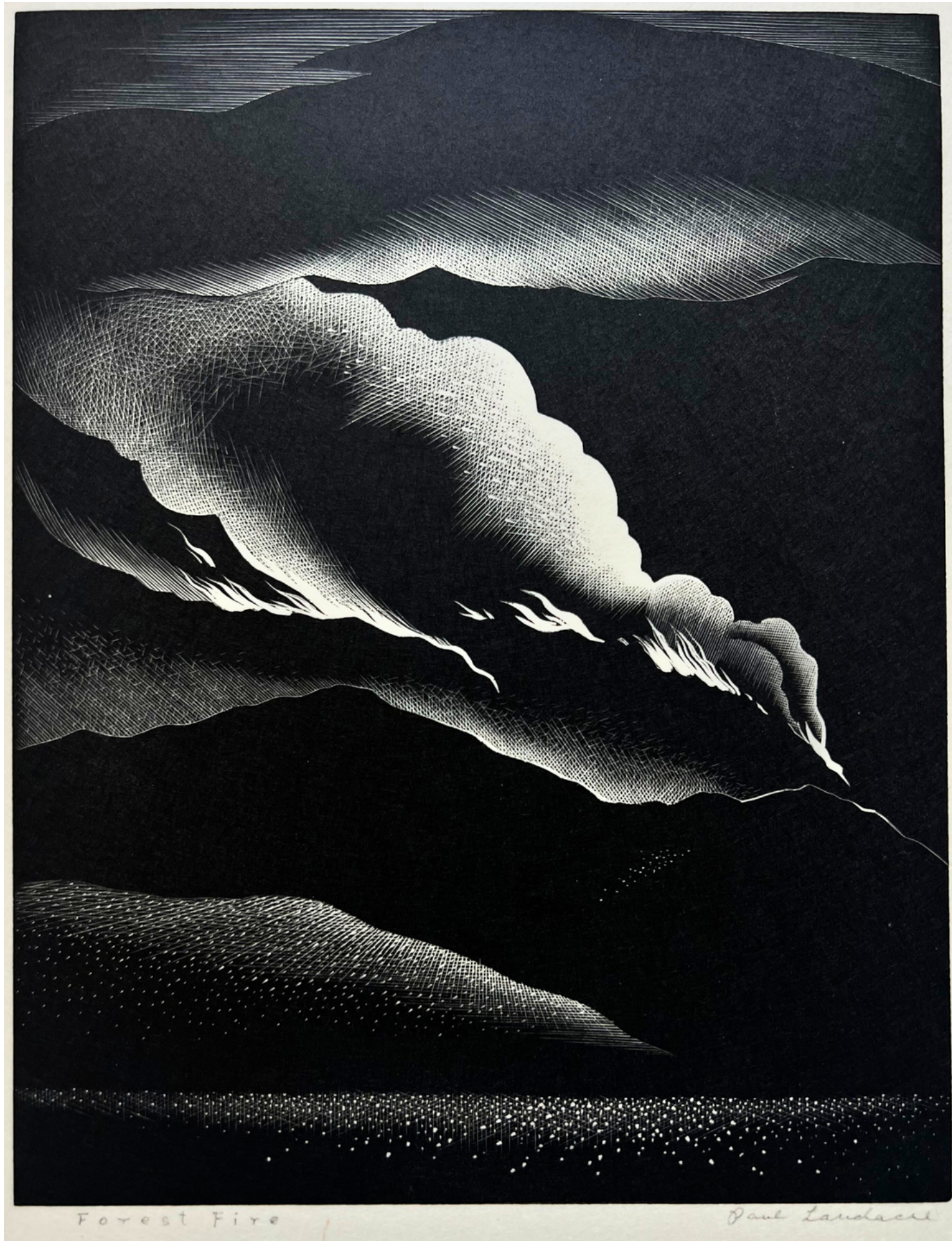
Mount Baldy is located in the San Gabriel Mountain range in San Bernadino County. About 100 were printed by Bruce McAllister, unsigned, for the Scripps College yearbook, but the signed proofs printed by the artist are rare. Landacre used sweeping, curving parallel lines to describe the mountains in this diminutive wood engraving.



24. *Flight*, 1954

Wien 298, only state. Wood engraving on wove paper, watermarked JAPAN, full margins. One of only 22 signed impressions (the edition of 250 was never completed). Very rare. Signed, titled and numbered 14/250 in pencil. 4 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " ; 12.4 x 24.1 cm.

Flight was printed by Landacre as a vertical composition, as pictured, or a horizontal, both equally compelling but with divergent effects. An abstraction in the vertical configuration, *Flight* reads as a landscape in the horizontal format. The print was included in the 50th anniversary exhibition in Philadelphia in 1954 to honor the first flight of the Wright Brothers.



25. *Forest Fire, 1937*

Wien 203, only state. Wood engraving on wove japanese paper, full margins. Edition of 25, commissioned by the Federal Art Project. Rare. Signed and titled in pencil.

8 x 6 ¼" ; 20.3 x 15.9 cm.

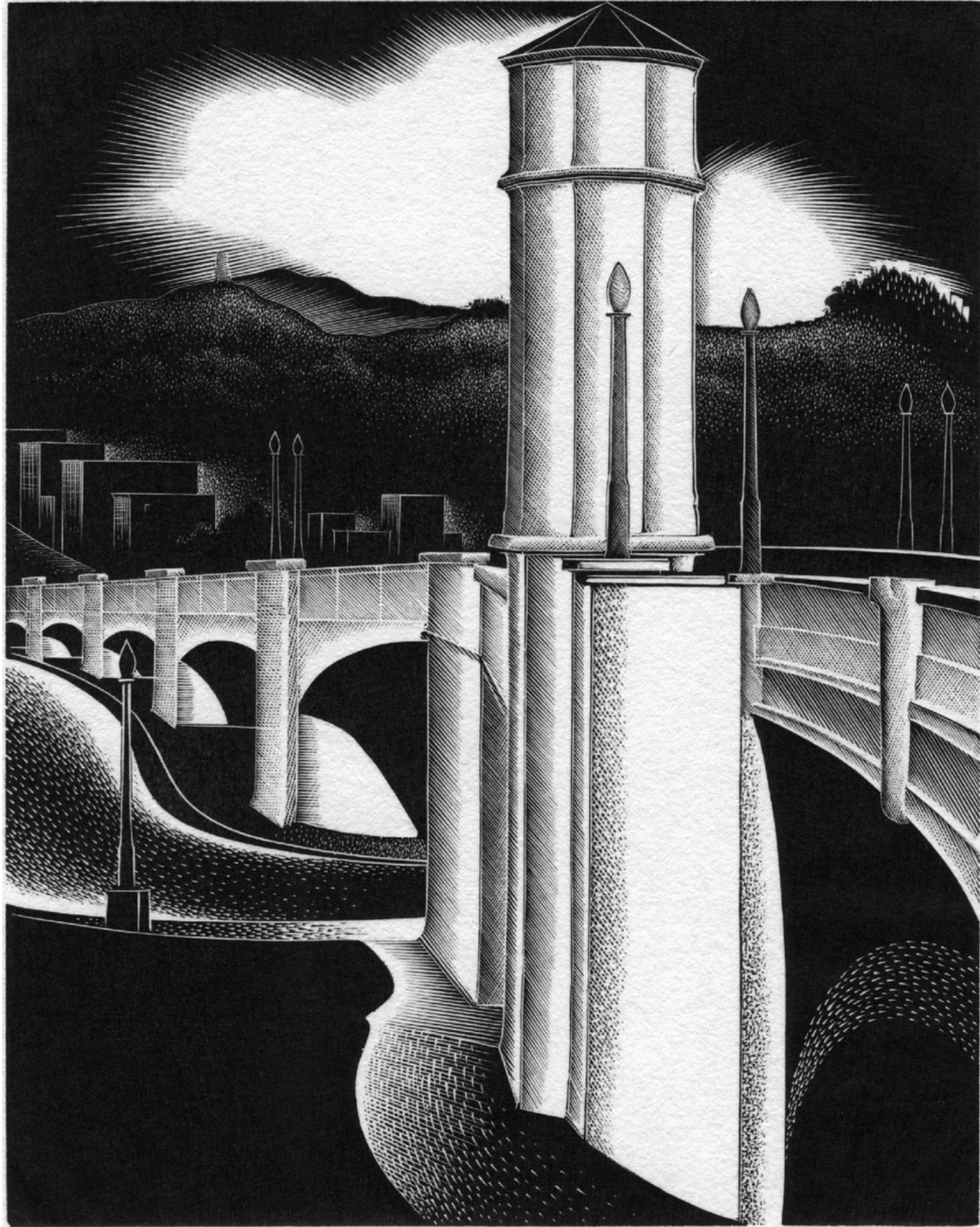
According to Wien, *Forest Fire* was completed before the larger *Death of a Forest*. Landacre expressed his opposition to regional controlled burns, which he believed endangered homes and wildlife, in his wood engraving *Lot Cleaning - Los Angeles*. However, in *Forest Fire* and *Death of a Forest*, he finds beauty even in destructive wildfires.

26. *Forest Fire, 1937*

Wien 203, only state. Wood engraving on wove japanese paper, full margins. One of five unsigned impressions apart from the signed edition of 25. Rare. Commissioned by the Federal Art Project. With the petrel estate stamp, and inscription in the lower margin "Fire in L.A. Hills" in pencil. Annotated by the artist at bottom right "For ML" (his wife, Margaret).

8 x 6 ¼" ; 20.3 x 15.9 cm.

(not pictured)



27. *New Bridge (or Glendale), 1936*

Wien 182 ii/ii. Wood engraving on wove japanese paper. One of four unsigned impressions apart from the five impressions that may be signed; there was no edition. Descriptively annotated "Freeway" posthumously in pencil, lower left margin. Very rare. Petrel stamp recto and the Origins of Art stamp verso. 7 1/8 x 5 5/8" ; 18.1 x 14.3 cm.

The Glendale-Hyperion Bridge, completed in 1929, was not far from Landacre's home in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. In *New Bridge*, an unusual subject for the artist, Landacre applied his modernist clean lines to create a geometric, precisionist cityscape. *New Bridge* was published on the cover of *Westways* magazine in May 1936, and as a tribute to the artist, it was also on the cover of the September 2009 *Westways* magazine.



28. *Monterey Hills, 1930*

Wien 88, only state. Wood engraving on cream wove paper.
One of 33 signed impressions (there were also 16 unsigned impressions printed by the artist). *Monterey Hills* was included in the 1931 bound folio, *California Hills and other Wood Engravings*, published in an unsigned edition by McCallister. Signed impressions are very rare.
Signed, titled and numbered 30/50 in pencil. 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ " ; 14.9 x 20 cm.



29. *Monterey Hills, 1930*

Graphite drawing on cream wove paper watermarked WARREN'S OLDE STYLE. One of two studies for the wood engraving (illustrated).
12 $\frac{7}{16}$ " x 19" ; 31.6 x 48.3 cm.



30. *Laguna Cove*, 1941

Wien 247 ii/ii. Wood engraving on wove
japanese paper.

Edition of 200 published for the Woodcut
Society of Kansas City, 1941.

Signed and titled in pencil.

5 ¼ x 7 ⅛" ; 13.34 x 18.1 cm.

The original folder issued by The Woodcut
Society with *Laguna Cove* included Landacre's
comments:

*"The subject of this present engraving,
'Laguna Cove', is a favorite spot near Laguna
Beach, California. One summer night the
moon seemed to illuminate this particular
scene and create a pattern of light and
shadows that had to be recorded."*

Paul and Margaret Landacre were married in
1925 at midnight at Laguna Cove, on their
birthdays. Years later, in celebration of their
birthdays just a day apart, Landacre produced
a preparatory drawing, a woodcut, and then
this wood engraving of Laguna Cove.



31. *Downpour*, 1928

Wien 52, only state. Wood engraving on wove japanese paper, full margins.

Edition of 100, but only 59 were printed.

Signed, titled and numbered 60/100 in pencil.

6 x 7 1/8" ; 15.24 x 18.1 cm.

Provenance: Artist's estate

Downpour was included in the 1931 bound folio, *California Hills and other Wood Engravings*, published in an unsigned edition by Bruce McAllister. Signed impressions are very rare.