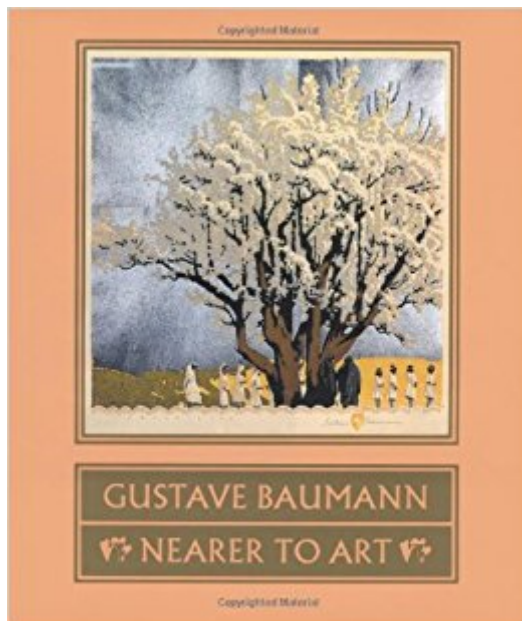


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# Gustave Baumann: Nearer To Art



## Synopsis

Baumann's stunning woodcut prints of the great landscapes of the Southwest, the Pacific Coast, Grand Canyon and scenes of the artist colony days in Santa Fe are awash in brilliant hand-ground pigments that are delicately rugged and both personal and mystic. As these colours woodcuts attest, Baumann was a remarkable artist and craftsman.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Independent, prolific, and influential, Gustave Baumann stands at the center of American woodcut printmaking in the first half of the century. He created vivid, brilliantly colorful nature-inspired scenes of rural American life and Indian cultures. His prints are simple and elegant studies rooted in a landscape that is both delicate and rugged. This award-winning book is the first published collection of his stunning oeuvre. Starting out as a commercial illustrator, at night Baumann studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, "to get nearer to art," and also briefly in Munich, refining the fundamentals of his artistic direction and creating his first woodcuts in a medium that would bring him international recognition. Baumann lived in Chicago and Brown County, Indiana, and then spent more than a half-century in Santa Fe, taking frequent side trips about the West and California and creating his most beloved prints. AIGA, Fifty Best Books, 1993. RMBPA, Best Illustrated Book, 1994. AAM, Design Competition, Second Prize, 1994

David Acton et al

Love this book! Came in great condition.

A nicely crafted book that covers all bases in this artist's career. Great reproductions of the prints, well-written text and a solid book to hold in your hand. History on Baumann covers beginning of career to the end with just a touch of the technical side of this art form. Certainly inspired me!

German-born artist Gustave Baumann (1881-1971) immigrated to America at the age of ten. After beginning his career in Chicago and the artist colony of Brown County, Indiana, he settled in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he lived and worked for more than five decades. Baumann was a master of the color woodcut who combined traditional European relief printing methods with a modernist sensibility of color and form. Applying his craft to the Western landscape and subjects relating to Native American culture, Baumann created an impressive body of work which is lovingly celebrated in this excellent retrospective published in 1993. The book begins with an introductory preface and two illustrated essays on Baumann's life, work, and methods. Together they combine to form an admirable abbreviated biography of the artist. At times the writing can be a little dry, reading like an annotated résumé, but personally I prefer the just-the-facts approach over the many artist biographies that read like psychological profiles. The essays are illustrated with a variety of works chronicling all stages of Baumann's career, as well as photographs of the artist. One of Baumann's prints, *Spring Blossoms*, is singled out for a technical demonstration of his artistic process. The eight color layers which comprise the work are reproduced individually to illustrate how they progressively combine to form the final artwork. Following the essays, the book concludes with 70 pages of color plates. With a few exceptions, the 123 illustrations are reproduced beautifully, and the majority are given full-page treatment. The illustrations among the essays are sometimes laid out in a two-column format, rendering the prints so small they don't do justice to the beauty of Baumann's detailed carving. In such cases the reader may find himself hunting for a magnifying glass. Baumann often began his print designs from studies painted in gouache, several of which are reproduced here. These gouache studies look fuzzier than the woodcut prints, though I suspect this has more to do with Baumann's painterly technique than with issues of photographic reproduction. There are a couple isolated instances where images have a blurry appearance that suggests they were reproduced from lower resolution scans than the rest of the book (namely figures 3 and 82). It is unfortunate that these few bad examples have to mar an otherwise exceptionally printed book. Though Baumann utilized European printing techniques, there is a subtlety to his work that

evokes the Japanese woodcut style. His ink application is somewhat mottled in its consistency, allowing the white paper to show through. This gives his prints a decidedly impressionistic feel, as opposed to the in-your-face patches of solid color often associated with block prints. Baumann's sublime landscapes call to mind the paintings of the California Impressionists or the Canadian artists The Group of Seven. As for fellow woodcut artists, his closest stylistic counterpart might be Norma Bassett Hall of the Prairie Print Makers. For fans of Baumann, this book is an exceptional tribute to the man and his work. For those who possess a love for the art of woodcut printing but may be unfamiliar with Baumann, this volume offers an excellent opportunity to get to know this master and his art. For either class of reader, browsing these pages is a joy and a revelation.

Helpful for learning about Baumann. Lots of photographs.

Beautiful book!

Some of the pages in this book are worthy of framing. Gustave Baumann is certainly one of the best southwestern artists.

This Gustave Bauman book is a wonderful gem. I ordered it for my Christmas present and was not disappointed. I love his woodblock designs and the reproduction quality in the book is clear; easy to see. I would recommend this to anyone who likes woodblock prints or arts and crafts design.

While the collection of images included is not exhaustive of all work done by Baumann, it provides a thorough sampling of his life work and details the process by which he created his masterpieces.

Excellent book. FYI, my understanding is that a new compendium will be done in 2008 that should be a good complement to this book.

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