

TUSCANY via GUMPRINT



Canal on Isle of Burano.



View of Santa Maria del Fiore.

An article on gumprinting, written by George W. Parker, appeared in the January 1980 PSA Journal. He described, in much detail, the process itself as well as the possibilities for creative control inherent in the process. In fact, I felt much the same as Mr. Parker apparently did when I discovered the gumprinting process about three years ago. After almost 20 years of conventional photography, I was fascinated by the first gumprints I saw. They reminded me more of impressionistic paintings than photographs; one can almost feel the individual color layers, and the

protracted process necessary to produce the prints seemed to present an interesting contrast to our (relatively) painless modern methods. I wanted to follow in the footsteps of our photographic ancestors and expose the prints using only sunlight, in order to experience the difficulty—and the ultimate pleasure—of this process. (Of course, I now use ultraviolet lamps as well, for speed and convenience.) When I first started working with this technique, using sunlight, it sometimes took me four months (I could only work on weekends) to get a satisfactory gumprint.

From the begin-

ning, I tried to produce multicolored prints that gave a nearly natural impression. On the other hand, it was not my intention to try to compete with modern color materials by trying to produce absolutely true-to-nature colors, although this would be possible. Even as the painter has the creative freedom to use color as he perceives it, so too does the gumprinter. I relished this freedom.

I found myself with the opportunity to take photographs of some beautiful scenery—scenery which has attracted many artists over the centuries—on the occasion of a recent trip to

The painterly quality of gumprints seems particularly appropriate for these images of the land where the Renaissance was born.



Tuscan landscape.



Manor house atop a hill in Tuscany.

Italy. My path wound through Venice, the city of canals, and on to Florence and the region of Tuscany.

As I had been to Venice before and time was short, I decided to spend my time on the Isle of Burano, a small offshore island that, like Venice, is criss-crossed by canals (page 20). On Burano, everything is a little more modest than in Venice, but also more peaceful.

Heading south, one soon reaches Florence, a city which presents its brightest, most beautiful face in the spring. From the green and flourishing hills

that surround Florence, one can capture wonderful views of the valley of the river Arno, on which the city is situated. Florence is the center of Italy's intellectual and artistic culture, and the rich history of the city is evident in its magnificent architecture. Above the panoramic sweep of the city rises the Cathedral of Florence, Santa Maria del Fiore (page 20), which was built during the 13th and 14th centuries. The surrounding region of Tuscany charms by virtue of its peaceful, gentle character (above left). Dark cypress trees and bright, silvery olive trees blanket the hillsides, the loveliest of which are dominated by the beautiful

and stately manors of the well-to-do (above).

Once I returned home, I had much fun working on the gumprints. To me, the images on these pages (which were printed from slides taken of the original gumprints) have an almost classical feeling and are particularly well-suited to the gumprinting technique. All the prints were made from four or five negatives, which were ordinarily done by enlargement from positive transparencies with different exposure times. I occasionally used another negative with clouds to get a more dramatic sky.

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