Felix Vallotton
Swiss-born, French Nabis Painter
The Nabis painters were closely associated with the Symbolists and Art Nouveau. Pierre Bonnard and Edouard Vuillard were the leaders of this group that lasted from 1890 to 1898.
The Nabis turned away from Impressionism’s emphasis on “ephemeral effects,” and focused on simplifying the imagery of a painting into basic shapes and interaction of color or value.

In Vallotton’s prints you can see his extreme reduction of imagery into only black and white shapes.
His prints are high contrast, but also reveal his great skill in the abbreviation of form. Fields of black dominate the white highlights.

Yet, the viewer can infer from the shapes present what is there in the dark, even though the detail is not actually articulated.
Le Poker, 1896.
Bois,
17,9 × 22,4 cm.
Notice that he reverses the ground. It starts out white with black highlights up top, and then becomes black with white highlights on bottom.
Notice his mix of solid black forms and open outlines -- with contour lines.
Another example of Vallotton’s great sense of abbreviation, and mix of bold shapes and contour lines.
Les Rassemblements, Couverture de l’ouvrage paru en 1896.
Notice how only a few of the faces actually have detail. Yet, there is lots of humor and personality part of this print.
High-contrast portraits

72  Emile Zola, 1894.
    Encre de Chine, 10 × 8 cm.

51  A Ibsen, 1894.
    Bois,
    16 × 12,5 cm.
A Edgar Poe, 1894.
Bois,
16 × 12,5 cm.

A Baudelaire, 1892.
Bois,
18,7 × 11 cm.
Faces in foreground have detailed features, but the faces in the middle ground are only a simple carved mark.
4  *L’Assassinat*, 1893.
Bois,
14,7 × 24,5 cm.
For more information please explore the following websites:

• http://www2.unil.ch/fvalloton/

• http://www.artoftheprint.com/artistpages/valotton_felix_portraitofpuvisdechavannes.htm

• http://www.historyofpainters.com/nabi.htm