

THE CALIFORNIA PRINTMAKER

THE JOURNAL OF THE CALIFORNIA SOCIETY OF PRINTMAKERS

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"I am certain that many printers have felt this extreme fire of collaboration..."

The wizardry and alchemy that is wielded by the creative technician enriches the experience of the final image, but it must never dominate or dictate the creative thrust. If highly technical skills override the concept of the artist, the works become hollow. To become a breathing life force, the artistic ingredient must be felt rather than just used as a display of surfaces, textures, and colors—beautiful but lacking in substance. The work must dance on the edge of the abyss."

—Bob Blackburn

Bob Blackburn was named an honorary member of the CSP in 1999. A major force in contemporary printmaking, he founded and continues to direct the Printmaking Workshop in Manhattan and has collaborated with many of the most important artists of our time.



Editor's Note

In recent years and for the foreseeable future, the editorship of the CSP journal is an unpaid and once-only job taken on by a willing member of the Society. I had no idea when I began this year that it would be such an interesting adventure. I began my task with the idea that the whole journal would be "in praise of printers." I perceived printers as under-recognized in the world of printmaking and in the world at large. My idea was to interview artists who work with printers and have them speak in depth about a printer who was most important to them.

I was most fortunate to speak with Alex Katz first, who then sent me in search of Doris Simmelink. My preconceptions



fell away as each interview lead me to another with its own logic, thanks in part to the generosity of each person with whom I spoke. Doris recommended that I speak with Ruth Fine and Ruth recommended that I read Pat Gilmour who was in Europe (too far away to interview).

I have tried to reproduce for the reader this evolution of ideas as they happened. After speaking with Ruth, it was evident that wider questions about the state of printmaking today needed to be asked. For this I decided to focus on the San Francisco Bay Area and its artists, curators, and critics, since a majority of CSP members work in the Bay Area. Questions of the state of printmaking naturally opened out my research to expose all aspects of our printmakers' world and our ongoing struggles to improve our lot. The input from the Washington Printmakers offers a strong alternative to the way the CSP is now focused. Perhaps our Society would like to move in the direction of forming its own gallery. If not, Carolyn Pomponio has offered a valuable document to any group looking to do so.

I have taken the position that people are an essential and interesting part of our shared activity. Wherever possible, I have retained the words of those who are rep-

resented here so that they can be appreciated in their own terms and humanity. I hope the opinions and representations here will stimulate thought, discussion, and even controversy, and that all of those will lead to greater creative acts.

I am totally indebted to all the people who spoke with me during this year and who contributed to this journal. My only regret is that there were others to whom I would like to have spoken and represented in these pages. Naturally I have failed in the impossible task of drawing a complete picture of our printmaking world. I will not enumerate what I believe I have left out but only hope that the next editor will fill in the untouched spaces.

—Sandy Walker

Sandy Walker received his BA from Harvard College cum laude and his MEA from Columbia University. He is a painter and printmaker who has had solo exhibitions at the Fresno Art Museum, Smith Andersen Editions (Palo Alto), List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA, the San Jose Museum of Art and the Riverside Art Museum among many other locations. He has work in many collections in the United States including the Cleveland Museum of Art, de Saisset Museum, Fogg Art Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Sandy lives and works in Oakland, California.

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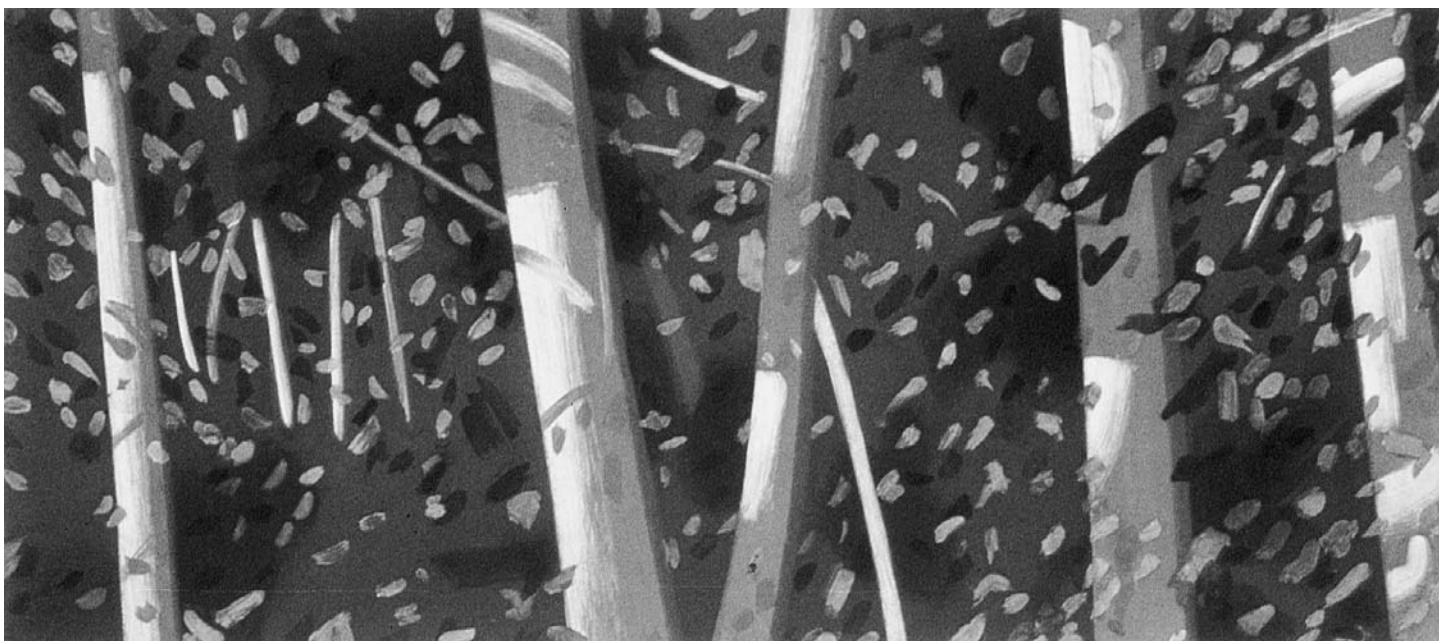
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Alex Katz, *Forest*, aquatint, 1992, 30" x 67 1/2" (Photograph © 1992 Douglas M. Parker)

You Can't Separate the Printing from the Product: An Interview with Alex Katz

By Sandy Walker

Painter and printmaker Alex Katz was born in 1927 in Brooklyn, New York. Internationally recognized, he has had retrospectives of his paintings at the Whitney Museum of American Art (1986) and of his prints at the Brooklyn Museum (1988). In 1996, a forty-four year survey of his landscapes was organized by P.S. 1 in New York City. In 1998, the Saatchi Collection in London presented a twenty-five year survey of his painting. At present his work is being shown in the Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt. He was interviewed in his studio in September 1998.

Sandy Walker: I wanted to ask you about different printers that you have worked with. I was hoping that you could pick out a few individual printers to talk about, or even just talking about one printer would be great.

Alex Katz: Well, I ended up working with Doris Simmelink, and her husband, Chris Sukimoto. They were really quite fine—actually fantastic—to work with. Doris understood what I was trying to do. All the prints we've done there have been technically experimental. She's added a great deal to my knowledge of what I can do as an artist. You can't really separate the printing from the product, you know. The technique is a big determiner of the aesthetics. It's similar in painting. One of the interesting things to me about printmaking is coordinating the aesthetic with the technical, and pushing it out into areas where people haven't been before.

Doris is fabulous and her husband is a fantastic partner. They work very patiently in order to make the print absolutely as good as possible. There was one print that we brought up for proofing twenty-six times while the edition was probably thirty. So there were almost more proofs than there were prints in the edition. I was satisfied with it at the seventeenth proof. I thought it was done. But she thought she could get it better, so she went and proofed it nine more times. Now, that is quite unusual for a printer.

She also introduced me to other techniques that we could use. I wanted something that had the immediacy of a pen line, which is very difficult to get. But she knew what I wanted and kept trying to get at that. We were sending plates back and forth. I was in Maine. We were working on a big tri-colored etching portfolio, and we were trying to get a line that was fluid. Finally we found a way to do it, and it was a new thing. The kind of thing that most people wouldn't even notice, but with a nice fluid line. I hadn't seen one like that before.

SW: Could you be more specific about your techniques. What about those twenty-six proofs?

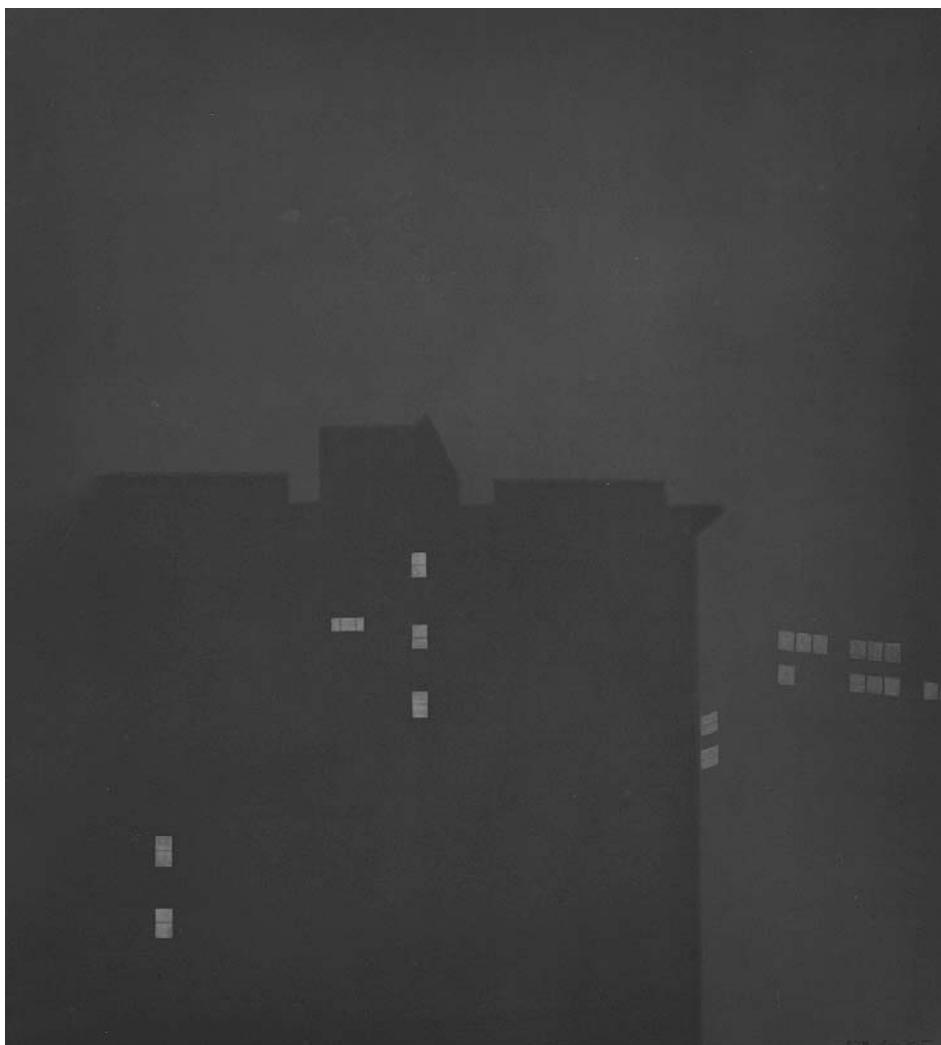
AK: Those twenty-six proofs were on a print that nobody thinks of. It was for *New Year's Eve*. Like the painting *New Year's Eve*, and it's all red. And it had to do with color

and edges, and the thinness of the ink. If the ink is too thick it doesn't work. The thickness of the ink and the color have to be perfect. It's most difficult when you are putting together a three-to-four-color etching and you are putting wet ink into wet ink. And so the colors change. And if you change the order of the plates, the colors will be different. It's incredibly demanding. Great big aquatints are real hard. And very few people can make them look good. She's a terrific printing unit. You have an idea of what you want a print to look like and the printer has to figure out how to do it. A good printer can anticipate what you want to do, and make suggestions that you wouldn't have thought of.

I work with Chris Erikson. I've worked with him on woodcuts. He's really technically fantastic. He was at the same level as Simmelink. I did some lithos with him. He did one that was four-by-six feet, but his press could only handle four-by-four feet. So he seamed it. And put a silkscreen over it. And I defy you to find where the seam is, you just can't see it. It's technically out of sight.

SW: Do you often work with printers by correspondence?

AK: Well, I did with Doris Simmelink on the Greeley thing, but I've been working with her for ten years or so.



Alex Katz, New Year's Eve, aquatint, 1992, 38" x 34" (Photograph © 1998 Douglas M. Parker)

SW: So that was possible because the two of you understood each other so well?

AK: Yeah.

SW: Would you describe printers as collaborators?

AK: Yeah, definitely, it's a collaboration.

SW: I'm curious about what your attitude is towards collaboration, because in your painting you alone are very much in charge.

AK: When you collaborate, you sort of get a double energy. You get a little more energy. If I were restricted to what I could do technically, the stuff wouldn't have that energy. It takes a lot of people. It takes six hours to make one print, you know? It's beyond my imagination, how anyone could do it by themselves. In painting I don't want anyone else. When you're working with other people or with other elements you get a kind of energy that you can't get in a canvas. It's a collaboration, but I'm definitely the boss. I'm still saying to the printer, "lighter" or "darker."

SW: You often seem to make prints from your paintings...

AK: It was like art, making my paintings into reproductions. That was the idea of prints to me. It's not a painting, but sometimes a print will start from a painting, or the dominant color in a painting, like red. Sometimes we'll take the painting right into the print studio.

Prints can have energy to hold down a wall the way paintings do. As objects, you know? Prints are thought of differently now than they used to be. They never used to take the place of a painting on a wall. Prints were smaller—the old ones, like, say, Rembrandt, whose prints made him famous in Italy because they were able to go all over the place—the dissemination of images. Since the sixties, though, prints have been made to hold down a wall like a painting.

SW: Do you ever like your prints more than the paintings.

AK: Yes, I think some of my prints are better than my paintings, like some sketches are better than the paintings.

SW: Is there any image you can name where you think the print wins?

AK: Well, *Luna Park* is one of my most famous paintings. I made two prints of *Luna Park*, made them the same size, and we couldn't get the colors right. Brice Marden was the color-mixer at the time. The two of us were working these colors. We never got the colors right. But the print was spectacular. I liked it as much as the painting. Chiron Press made it ten years later, we got the colors right, and it wasn't as good. It was kind of a peculiar thing.

SW: I appreciate hearing you talk about the relationships you've had with printers, and the process of collaboration which is involved.

AK: It's definitely a collaboration. I couldn't make prints without them, you know. They're way more talented than I am in this area. Those printers are really quite incredibly gifted artisans. Incredible artisans. They take pride in trying to do well. They all want to do something they haven't done before, with me or with anyone else. They make very different prints for different artists. They have to. Definitely, it's a collaboration, but I have to sign it.

SW: Do you find that printers are an unusual kind of person because they do this work but really don't get promoted all that much?

AK: Well they have their reputation in their field. It's a big field.

SW: Most people are kind of religious about what part of the process the artist does and what part the printer does. You don't seem to be concerned though.

AK: No, not at all. You end up making up the rules as you go along. I don't really care about the process. I mean, it's not important to me who does what.

SW: You are interested in experimentation in printmaking?

AK: Well, it's mostly about how the experimentation can affect the aesthetics of the end product. It's an aesthetic thing. Take etching. The problem with etching is the edges. Goya had that problem in his aquatints. He would hide the edges of the aquatints with line or overlaps. But, you can see in the early ones the edges were more visible. As he experimented more, he learned different ways to hide the edges. It was an aesthetic decision.

SW: It seems that aesthetically you are motivated to make prints that look like paint-

ings, instead of allowing the look of their own processes dominate. Is there a kind of, say, postmodern motivation in wanting one medium to look like another, not like itself?

AK: No. It's not like I'm out making a postmodern object, I just thought I wanted them to look like the paintings. I didn't want a hard edge. The thing of the purity of the medium, it's not a concern to me.

Photographs on this page: (below) Derrick Isono, John Shibata, Doris Simmelink, and Alex Katz; (bottom) Alex Katz, John Shibata, and Doris Simmelink; (bottom right) Doris Simmelink in her office.

The End Result is the Artist's Sensibility: An Interview with Doris Simmelink

By Sandy Walker

Doris Simmelink went to Moore College of Art in Philadelphia, receiving a BEA in printmaking in 1971. She was trained and became a master printer at Crown Point Press between 1975 and 1978. She was a master printer with Gemini from 1981 to 1984, printed independently in New York City and Los Angeles from 1984 to 1986, and formed a partnership with Chris Sukimoto in 1987. Simmelink/Sukimoto Editions operated in Marina del Rey until summer of 1999, when they moved to Rock Tavern, New York in the Hudson Valley. Doris Simmelink was interviewed in her studio in Marina del Rey in December 1998.

Sandy Walker: I've talked with Alex Katz about his experiences collaborating with you and with a few other printers. I'm curious about how your experiences have been working with artists such as Alex Katz or any one else.

Doris Simmelink: Alex Katz has been incredibly generous in his support of us as printers. He's wonderful to work with because he knows a lot about printmaking, and he's

extremely professional. He's patient and cooperative and he shows his appreciation. He has no ego when it comes to the process. Though he is very clear about what he wants to see, he is very willing to do what we tell him to do. He understands our expertise, and he understands what we bring to the process. He's also very generous in his praise of us in the art community, and the amount of credit he gives us for the work that's done. This is definitely mutual appreciation.

Our business is fairly small, and, though I feel we have a good reputation in the print world, we (Chris and I) personally prefer a degree of anonymity. I don't think we are unlike most printers in that our main concern is to do good work. The most important thing about collaborating with a particular artist is that the finished product has an inherent quality. But what we try to do is teach techniques that



are comfortable and natural and fit an artist's style. It's important that, when people look at a print we've made, they say, for example, "That's an Alex Katz," rather than, "That looks like a Simmelink/Sukimoto etching." And partly for that reason we prefer not to use a chop on the prints we make. Documentation and technical information is always available to anyone who is interested.

SW: *When did you start printing for Alex Katz?*

DS: We started out working with him as contract printers for Crown Point Press and later other publishers including Marlborough Gallery. Our first published print with him was *New Year's Eve*. It was a lot of fun technically because it involved layering a number of transparent flat aquatints to achieve a very beautiful quality of light and color. The image is very simple but technically there was some very subtle plate-work and the printing wasn't easy. Soon after that he made a large landscape called *Forest* that is about thirty-by-sixty-nine inches and again was technically challenging.

Most of Alex's work is "challenging," which also makes it interesting for us. The portraits are difficult in that the plates are in and out of the acid many times in a series of short, controlled etches. There are very subtle tonal changes in the whole facial area. It may appear flat, but, in fact, it is not flat. The plate gets put into the acid for a short time, and Alex re-draws the edge each time it's etched, softening it so there is a gradual gradation which results in a subtle change in face tones, say from the cheek to the chin. It's really subtle.

SW: *How much of the process is Alex participating in?*

DS: Alex does all of the drawing or painting depending on which technique he is using. He has incredible facility. We would prepare the plates and do the more tedious work of blocking out, but it was amazing to see how quickly he would master a new technique. It could also be very nerve-racking because after watching him work for however long on a plate, there would be that fear element of losing the whole image somehow when we put the plate in the acid.

SW: *Alex mentioned that you introduced him to some techniques that he'd never tried before.*

DS: Yes, we did a book with Alex for Peter Blum called *Edges* with poems by Robert Creeley. We found a marker that worked like a lift ground and were able to send him plates in the mail and have him draw and return them to us to process. There was a kind of immediacy to the line that we hadn't been able to get before.

SW: *What kind of difficulties would you run into with Alex's work?*

DS: One of the things most difficult about printing Alex's work is the size of the images. Until the more recent projects most of Alex's prints have been large and made up of numerous plates. The editioning takes a long time, and with the more subtle portraits and large aquatints, there is little room for error. By using more plates we are able to separate tones and allow more mixing of colors in the printing. The negative aspect is the length of time it takes to print.

SW: *I would like you to talk a little about the process of transferring Alex's paintings to a print.*

DS: Alex usually sends a photograph or a slide ahead of time. Sometimes he sends small paintings that give us a feel for the color. We usually blow up the image to the size he has chosen and work out the mechanics of the print in terms of how many plates and what processes we will need to use. Often we make mylars from the blow up to have something specific to transfer to the

plate and will try to have a group of plates ready for him to start on so he can always be working. It's important to keep Alex working and, once he starts, things change. The image becomes a product of the process and his control of it. Because many plates are used for one image, and it takes a few proofs to find the right order and color value for each, there are possibilities that suggest another departure. The proofing is the most exciting part for me because we really get to watch the thinking process, the choices and the decisions that start pulling the image together.

SW: *So that's when the print takes on a life of its own?*

DS: That's when it takes on a life of its own. You can often recognize the image from the painting it was based on, but at this point you see how it is different as a print from the painting. It takes on a life of its own. There was a certain publisher who took the same Katz image and made a woodcut, a silk-screen, and an etching out of it. It was really interesting to see the same image done in three different techniques; you really could see how the individual processes of printmaking affect the end result.

SW: *Is he very involved in the technical side of things?*

DS: Well he's not involved in putting on the aquatint, but he tells us beforehand how he wants it to look. He tells us something aesthetic, and we translate it into technique. We tend to work with artists who are painters and don't necessarily want the responsibility of the technical part. Most of them don't want to wipe the plates or put them in the acid. They are good at what they're good at, and we try to make the technical part as unimposing as possible.

SW: *Does Alex seem to mind coming out to California?*

DS: He likes to come here. He likes to rent a convertible and drive around town. He loves the way it looks. Los Angeles has that kind of pop culture appeal, and I think Alex responds to that: the turquoise buildings and the pink buildings, and the blue sky, you know. It's really visually exciting to him. He definitely likes to come.

SW: *Do the two of you work well together?*

DS: We work very well together, and I think that's a necessary thing. There are personalities and styles that are being matched. I can be bossy with Alex because he sees that I'm involved in his work process. If I tell him what to do, it's to get to where he wants to be. What's interesting about working with Alex is that he's always working. He's always doing something. He's always pushing to the next place, and he can continually find the next place to go. Because of that he's a lot of fun to work with.

SW: *Do you think there's a big distinction between printers and artists?*

DS: Yes, I think there is. I think there are printers who love the process and work with it the same way a painter works with a painting process, in terms of their ideas about making art. But a printer who collaborates with an artist is like a technical consultant. It's exciting to take a painter's or sculptor's style and translate it into a process of printing which they may have known little or nothing about. It's fun to give an artist a plate and a drypoint tool and have them make a few marks just to see the beauty of that kind of line. It's a way to bring someone into the process even if they never use drypoint again. We can make suggestions and generally most artists catch on pretty quickly and take charge. A printer's ideas can enhance those of the artist because, really, we are trying to bring the artist's sensibility out. We might teach them techniques that relate to their sensibility, but the end result should be about the artist's sensibility, not the technique.

Collaboration / Editioning: An Interview with Ruth Fine

By Sandy Walker

Ruth Fine is curator of modern prints and drawings at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. She was interviewed in her office in January 1999.

SW: Were you an artist first and then became a scholar?

Ruth Fine: I'm a curator. I was a painter and printmaker first and I'll be that last, I assume. Other things have been in the middle, but I continue to work in the studio. I taught printmaking and set up an etching shop at a small college that had focused only on lithography, and I started a screen-printing program there, in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

SW: Where?

RF: Beaver College, outside Philadelphia, at the time a women's liberal arts college. The dean of Philadelphia printers, as he was called, Benton Spruance, taught lithography there for many years. He is one of the people who kept lithography going through the 1950s with his own printing and use of color lithography. But he never got very much into etching or screenprinting even as a teacher. I was followed at Beaver by Judith Brodsky who is now at Rutgers University. I stopped teaching in 1972.

SW: Maybe I could ask you a little background first, if you don't mind? Your first profession as an artist, how have you continued to work over these years?

RF: Secretly. I've worked over all the years. It's not something I talk about very much, or that I even especially want to talk about very much. I don't show except occasionally at universities. Most recently I had a show at Marlborough college in Vermont. And I've never stopped being serious about my own work. I have stayed private about it because people often think what they like or what they're interested in is only what is good. I would never want anybody to think what I do has an enormous impact on what I am interested in because it doesn't, actually.

SW: My theme as editor is that we are not particularly aware of the printer per se. I feel that the printer is very important in the production of prints, very important to an artist. The people whom I talk to say, "Why, I couldn't make the print without them." What we are aware of is the publisher. We're well aware that certain publishers have been important, like Gemini or Crown Point or whatever, but we don't know who the printers were, "we" being the general public.

RF: The general public doesn't know very much about printmaking at all, no matter how hard we work to change that.

SW: I wanted to make this journal "in praise of printers." I wanted to shed light on them and the feeling that they are very important. I just thought this would be a valuable and interesting thing, at least within our world, meaning the Printmaking Society and wherever that would lead.

RF: I don't disagree with your main point, but I think printers' names are out there in a variety of places. We try to give them credit. Exhibition labels are always a point of discussion, because nobody wants them to be too long. And some staff want the artist's name, period. Over the years, I know we've managed to get the publisher's name on wall labels. Sometimes whether we've gotten the printer's name on the wall had to do with how many printers were involved. The printers list could be a list of twenty-five people. I mean, where do you stop? In a small shop



Ruth Fine at Gemini G.E.L. (Photograph by Sidney B. Felsen)

there are only one or two printers. But in some of the bigger shops you have two people who are working in the collaboration phase and three people doing the editions and four people assisting with the editions, so there are a number of people that need to be credited. It gets very involved.

Obviously, ideally, everybody who's done the work gets the credit he or she deserves. And so if you try to cut down, for example in lithography, by not giving the "spongers" credit, well, why shouldn't the spongers get credit? If the spongers don't keep the stone wet, the print is then screwed up. So aren't the spongers as important as the printers?

SW: It's a very good point. Please talk to me about this.

RF: I think the role of the printer varies from shop to shop, and artist to artist, and print to print. In developing a print I think the most important person is the one you're collaborating with from the outset, because that's what I think of as the period of creative input. If that person continues into the printing phase, that's fine. If that person doesn't continue into the printing phase, is the printer really contributing something creative or not? I don't know the answer. But I do think there is a difference between a printer who does the edition only, and a printer who's been involved with the collaboration as well.

SW: You know, we're talking in terms of acknowledgements. Not only are there printers who really do want acknowledgement, but there are printers who don't want acknowledgement.

RF: That's right. And there are printers who do collaborate and printers who don't collaborate. And artists who are willing to allow the printers to collaborate, and artists who are not willing to allow the printers to collaborate. Artists who, in 1984, wouldn't confirm the printers as collaborators, but in 1994, would allow that they are collaborators. So, you're not dealing with the same situation all of the time.

SW: And we're talking about the same thing...

RF: The same printers, the same everything. The point of view has changed. The artists are more comfortable in their skin, so they don't mind sharing where sharing is due. If the artists don't want to share credit with the printers, the printers are not going

to try to get credit and thereby alienate the artists. But I do think this has changed radically over the years, and the role of the printers is increasingly acknowledged.

SW: Right. So it becomes sort of a political question then, doesn't it?

RF: I think it's a psychological question.

SW: Not social...sociopolitical?

RF: I think it's psychological. Maybe it's a political question secondarily.

SW: Is it a political question for you or a social question for you in terms of labeling? Wasn't there a time when it would not be considered correct to put the printer on there? It is a time now, maybe which is more democratic, when minorities are being recognized. Is that involved here?

RF: No, I really think it's an aesthetic thing and a personal thing. I think it has to do with what I believe in and having the ability to say this is what we should do. I think a lot of people don't even bring up the subject. If it's less important to a curator that the printer's or publisher's name be mentioned, it doesn't come up. (And I think that's a generational thing; most young curators are knowledgeable and concerned about this.) Sometimes whether that information is on a wall label or not basically boils down to an aesthetic decision. What's that wall label going to look like if everybody's name is on it? And how many people would actually read a long list of names? And how much time would that take away from looking at the print itself? Instead, the full information would be in the catalogue or brochure. If somebody really cares about something, they're usually going to get the catalogue, or they can see it in the library. So what we try to do is give all the information in some form. I don't know that... I don't think it's political, actually. Maybe it is, but for me it's not political. For me it's...a form of accuracy.

SW: Could you state what you believe in on this subject.

RF: I think everybody who works on something should be acknowledged. I do that whenever it's possible in one way or another. But I don't know if that necessarily tells anybody a lot unless a viewer already knows a lot. If you don't know what the words mean, if you don't know the difference between collaboration and printing, if you don't know the difference between assisting and printing, if you don't know the difference between the way this shop works and that shop works, if you don't know the difference in temperament among artists and printers... Most information is coded. You have to know the codes. And there's no one easy answer for how giving credit needs to be done.

Every shop has a different way in which this is treated, and every person has a different way in which he or she wants to be treated. I don't think it's as simple as giving credit or not giving credit. I believe in giving credit. But I think most people don't know what kinds of interaction take place in a collaborative situation. If you're an artist and you're with a printer, and you're talking about something, I don't really think anybody, two hours later, is necessarily going to remember which words were used by whom or who finished which sentence.

I think some of the differences also depend on the medium. Woodcut is different, I think, from etching or lithography in the sense that you can prepare your blocks and then go find a printer. I can't make my etching plates and then go find a printer. I don't have the equipment, I don't want the equipment.

SW: Yes. I wanted you to shift hats right now. That's great.

RF: I have had no desire to work in etching with anyone but

Simmelink/Sukimoto. Doris Simmelink is sympathetic, she knows where I'm coming from. She doesn't say a lot, but whatever she says matters. It really is like a marriage if you're going to get involved in working with someone. I'm not saying it's that way for everybody. But that's how it is for me. I also know that Doris has no agenda, and for me that's important. I've been invited to work by people who I wasn't sure had no agenda.

SW: Meaning, shifting to your other hat...

RF: That's right. I have to be very cautious there, too. I have a friend, Claire Van Vleit in Vermont with whom I also have worked, mainly to make books. She runs the Janus Press. And so those are the people I work with. I've known Doris for more than fifteen years. I've known Claire for forty. And it's comfortable. I've worked in two other situations briefly and they were both fine. I'm going to try working at another place this year that I've been wanting to see: Littleton Studios in Spruce Pine, North Carolina. Harvey Littleton, the glass artist, established it. They print from glass, a process called "vitriograph." I was invited there to make prints, but there also is that part of me that's the curator who cannot bear that there's a process out there that I haven't seen happen. Any opportunity to be part of a shop in action is interesting to me both as a curator and as an artist.

SW: Well, can you talk a little bit more about the fact that you couldn't make the prints that you make without Doris. Is that true?

RF: Well... that's very complicated because I do know most of the technical things. I've printed etching and lithographic editions for other artists, I've been a sponger for a litho printer. And I've taught printmaking. I have no desire to do edition printing right now and I don't have time either. I learn things from Doris technically that I have to believe I could have learned on my own, but I certainly enjoyed learning them with her more. It also went faster because I was with her. I don't work on a large scale generally, so it's not heroic acts of printing that I require, although there can be tight registration.

SW: Maybe you don't have the time or the inclination to print. But what is this other thing that happens, say, when you go to Doris's shop as opposed to another one or your own studio by yourself, assuming that you do have time.

RF: I think there's an atmosphere that is created in the shop. There is a setting in which there is the sense that whatever you want to do can be done without any major problems. I think that putting yourself into that kind of atmosphere has to enhance the ability to work in some way. It's intangible. In addition to that you come across situations where you know what you want to do and you don't know precisely how to do it. Then it's great having someone there to offer possibilities as to how to do it, options, because there's usually more than one way to do anything. That's something Kathan Brown talks about. She talks about how when an artist first comes to Crown Point, she wants the printers or the collaborators or whatever she wants to call them (Kathan doesn't like the term collaborator) to set out all the possibilities so that an artist can see all the options. I think that being in a place where anything can happen is very different than being in your own studio or being in a shop where you're the only person who can solve your problems.

I just think the word "printer" is not the right word. I think it's the "printer-collaborator," or the "collaborator-printer." As a curator, I spend a lot of time thinking about these distinctions, and I

think they are important distinctions. There are people who have a creative input while the work is happening. I think that's different than a situation where you may not own a press big enough for you to print your blocks. If your neighbor did, you, in fact, could go to your neighbor and do it. It's really a matter of taking time and energy to have somebody print those big blocks. You know how to do it. But you never know in a situation like that when something else is going to come up. If that something else comes up, then it becomes a new situation. Printing something that has already been finished is straightforward and is less of a creative activity. At least it was for me. Having been a printer of plates that were finished, I found it was a meditative activity. It was something I loved doing. And I can see that there's a highly creative aspect to figuring out how to print complicated prints, and then how to do so with consistency.

SW: *So when you start using the word "collaboration," you're taking about entering the creative process.*

RF: I'm talking about being there while it's happening. Whatever degree you enter into the creative process, it's going to vary again from artist to artist and printer to printer. Being there while the creative juices are flowing is what is important. I think once that's over, you're in a different part of the process. If nothing happens after the signing of that BAT or RTP impression—and, of course, we know that sometimes it does—but if nothing happens after that, then you're in a different place in the process. I don't mean to denigrate the importance of edition printers because, if we're going to have edition prints, we need edition printers, and certainly some are much better than others. I'm in no way saying it's an easy or unimportant thing to do. I'm just saying it's a different thing to do than participating in the development of the matrices used for prints.



Pat Gilmour

Comments by Pat Gilmour from the Print Collector's Newsletter

"I am interested in technique, because I think that is what's most interesting in prints in the twentieth century or from the end of the nineteenth century, is that artists—instead of reproducing ideas that they'd had in other media, or even having somebody else reproduce their ideas—began actually using print for whatever print could do. This was because photography had taken over the reproductive role. From that time you get etchings that really capitalize on the nature of etching, or lithographs that really capitalize on the nature of lithography. I think the very best prints in the first

half of this century are those in which you get a perfect fusion of content and technique.

I'm not interested in techniques in a virtuoso way. There are plenty of artists who can do everything God ever imagined technically, but they haven't actually got anything to say. I don't think I'm any more interested in those people than anybody else is. But I think that the outstanding characteristic of the twentieth-century print is that artists really got interested in what a particular technique could do that no other art form could do as well. And they realized things in print that they couldn't have realized any other way. We all know artists whose dealers try to interest them in prints because it's a way of publicizing themselves and a way of reaching another market. And very often they make watered-down versions of what they are making in other media. But the great graphic artists are those who found a way of using graphic art as a form of expression valuable for its own sake.

However, a great deal of rubbish is talked about original prints. Prejudice still reflects the notion of the reproduction, but I think reproductions can be wonderful. Look at Matisse's *Jazz*, for example. I bumped into somebody recently who was going on about the Crown Point project—the one in which artists do watercolors, craftsmen cut them in wood in Japan, and then the artist approves the result. The result can be very beautiful. Indeed, some of the most beautiful prints in the world—*ukiyo-e* prints—were made in this way. However, this person said of the Crown Point project: 'That's disgusting! When you get to that point in printmaking, the whole market starts to doubt what a print is. It brings the whole thing into disrepute.' Not ten minutes later, the same person showed me a woodcut portfolio he had published. 'Did the artist cut that himself?' I asked, thinking that it looked altogether too much like hard work for the star in question. 'No, of course not,' was the reply. 'The wood was too hard, so somebody else cut it for him.' What he was actually saying was that it's all right when I do it, but it's terrible when somebody else does it!

The crucial question for me is that of misrepresentation. It doesn't matter what's done, so long as no one is in any doubt as to who did what. What fascinated me when I was formulating *The Mechanised Image* was the extent to which people had rejected photography. Even though all sorts of selective processes were going on, photography was not permitted as a legitimate tool that the artist could use. In my view, the mind and the eye are totally involved in the photograph, or we wouldn't be collecting photographs. So if an artist wishes to use photography as an image or part of an image, that always seemed absolutely acceptable to me.... But when I first got really interested in prints, no image that used photography would even have been considered an original print. In my working lifetime I've seen that idea completely turned around."

— Vol. XIV No. 6 January-February 1984

"The collaborative relationship that leads to printed art is one in which ideas in the mind and imagination of the artist are translated into material form by the activity of hands with skills the artist does not possess. As Knigin and Zimiles (dealing with lithography) put it, the print studio is a place 'where artists and artisans unite their individual talents, transferring the artist's image from mind to stone to paper. The skills of each are of equal importance; the artist supplies the conception, the artisan the execution.' Despite this interdependence and the fact that without such a partnership, some of the most successful prints in the world would never have come into being, history has a way of recording, and therefore remembering, only the name of the artist. For while romantic tradition

has cast the fine artist as author and genius, the printer—the artisan or craftsman/mechanic—is a secondary figure expected to play a discreet and unobtrusive role.

Because the popular notion of a painter is of someone who conceives and executes autograph masterpieces in splendid isolation, when a painter accepts the help of collaborators in the print studio any perceptible contribution to the work by the printer is viewed with suspicion. As Chuck Close has explained: 'One of the things I disliked in the work of artists who had gone to a particular print studio to work [was that] the piece often had the look of the printer rather than the artist. Somehow the artist's vision and hand and all that stuff, when it was pushed through this factory which made images, was modified in such a way that it came out looking more like the work of the shop than the artist.'

The conception of an artist's work as gesture of autograph is still so dominant that printers themselves hesitate to claim any hallmark. Kathan Brown of Crown Point Press once said that if prints coming out of a press had a particular look it was 'because the same printer made them. Our printers deliberately avoid this. We want the prints to look as if the artist made them.' The idea that the prints might, quite legitimately, reveal the hand of both printer and artist is rarely seriously entertained, although it is often witnessed inadvertently. For example, when Chuck Close was given an opportunity to work with Kathan Brown in 1972, he decided he 'liked the look of her prints'; yet the same look has convinced Jim Dine that he is 'not interested in that kind of printing.'

One way of determining whether all those assisting in the resolution of a work contribute something perceptible to its appearance would be to compare the production of a single artist collaborating at workshops with very different philosophies and approaches.

Rauschenberg in his 'non-ego approach to life' once described printmaking as a collaboration with both people and materials in which he was 'a strong believer that two people having good ideas can produce more together than two people with good ideas working separately...the total result is generally so much greater, almost immeasurably.' Rauschenberg added recently that in trying to make works that go beyond his own taste, he wants to use not only the printer's craft and skill but his brain and aesthetic sense as well, and he castigates as 'usury' or 'slavery' the idea that a printer should be merely a pair of hands. 'Just because they have a sophisticated skill, no matter how sophisticated, it's a physical waste, and to my way of thinking, an artistic waste, not to use the entire body that those skilled hands come with.'

Kathan Brown, although trained elsewhere, exemplifies Tamarind's discreet reticence. She chooses staff at Crown Point not for intaglio skills (which she prefers to teach them from scratch) but for their sensitivity as people. The printer must 'know the right moment to make a suggestion on technique, the right moment to be quiet or not to be around at all' and 'shouldn't have an ego that gets in the way of his relationship with the artist.' While she admits that, for the sake of argument, she has sometimes overstated her belief that printers are not collaborators, and she knows 'deep down' that they have an input, nevertheless she does not want any of her printers to collaborate with the artist 'because I really want them to be the artist's hands and not his eyes.' She tells them that 'if there's any possibility of doing a thing in two different ways, to be sure to tell the artist both,' and she discourages them from comment 'unless they are directly asked for an opinion.'

Printers often have an exquisite contribution to make and rare abilities on which artists might capitalize, to the extent that one could imagine a sufficiently sensitized artist choosing to do one print with one shop and another elsewhere."

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"The term collaboration as used in printmaking is far from unproblematic. After several years of thinking about the subject, I'm reasonably sure that both artists and their printers contribute to the aesthetic of a print, the proportion of the contribution varying from case to case.

To the degree then that the printer's contribution is visible, I would suggest that the printer has contributed to the work's aesthetic, where 'aesthetic' means 'perceptible by the senses as opposed to thinkable or immaterial.'"

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"One of the catch phrases of recent years, uncritically accepted because it sounds so eminently reasonable, is that 'great artists make great prints.' The fact is that some great artists make pretty disappointing prints because they regard printmaking not as a form of expression by which they communicate ideas incommunicable by other means, but as an unimportant adjunct of their other work. This attitude leads them to a limited investment of time, an investment in which Picasso rarely stinted. The truth is that graphic art is a tremendously difficult game, played at one remove. The great graphic artists does not emerge like Athena springing fully armed from Zeus' head but only as the result of unrelenting toil. No artist can have worked quite as enthusiastically at printmaking as Picasso did, and it is not the least of their achievements that his best printers were able to sustain that dedication at white heat.

Picasso gave many signs that he respected the skill, invention, and capability of his printers and was never too proud to learn from them. As Hayter, who also helped him in the 1930s, once said, Picasso was a man who would take anything that suited his purpose from anybody whatever. 'That's a fine attitude for an artist,' he said. 'That's the way to do it.'

Despite the huge commitment in time and money that a printer may bring to the realization of an artist's work, print catalogues are still produced that barely mention the printer's involvement. It is chiefly the 'originality' conventions that have conspired to prevent our properly crediting their contribution. The belief that 'originality' resides in the unaided touch of genius cannot cope with the notion of a collaborative, cooperative activity, sometimes involving many hands. For example, in a review of a book I wrote recently about a particularly creative contemporary printer, I was ever-so-lightly rapped over the knuckles because in focusing on this printer, it was said, I had diminished the artist's role.

I must confess I do not see that giving due weight to the printer takes an iota from an artist's achievement. Picasso remains one of the greatest graphic artists of all time; it does him no harm whatever to note that he made more prints and greater prints when he had a gifted printer on his doorstep."

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These quotes are reprinted with permission from the Print Collector's Newsletter.

Pat Gilmour

By Robert Conway

I first met Pat Gilmour about fifteen years ago at June Wayne's Tamarind Avenue house in Los Angeles. Already familiar with her incisive, no-holds-barred writing, I was perfectly aware of the implications of the confluence of these two women and their hard-won perspectives on contemporary printmaking, and perfectly floored by Pat's self-effacing demeanor.

She introduced herself as "a poor pommie working down under." At the time, I didn't know what she meant—something about being a curator or an intellectual? The correct answer is much more prosaic. "Pommie" is Aussie slang for someone from England, derived possibly from the acronym P.O.M.E. (Prisoner Of Mother England), or at least that's what my on-line glossary tells me. Right, mate—the person who single-handedly turned London's Tate Gallery into a significant player in contemporary British printmaking and then did the same on a global scale for the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. Poor pommie, indeed!

Pat's *curriculum vitae* reflects a history common to many of us—an accidental course through schools and jobs that somehow leads to at least one right place at the right time. She studied sculpture in the late 1950s in Glasgow, art and education in London in the early 1960s, followed in 1973 by combined honors in the history of art and English literature at the University of London, where she wrote her dissertation, *The Original Print*. These studies led directly to a position at the Tate as founding curator of prints. There she organized ten exhibitions, mostly on contemporary British printmaking, writing two catalogues which won the National Book League award for Best Catalogue of the Year (*Henry Moore, Graphics in the Making*, 1975, and *Artists at Curwen*, 1977).

Four years later, she was appointed senior curator at the National Gallery of Australia, charged with founding and managing the Department of International Prints and Illustrated Books, a position she would hold for eight years. (In 1989, she returned to England and her current career as a free-lance art historian and curator.) Her tenure in Canberra was distinguished by another series of exhibitions and catalogues on printmaking, whose topics were as diverse as Picasso's "Vollard Suite," screenprints, and portraiture.

Listed among her activities down under are several shows, lectures and books involving Ken Tyler, a master printer and technical director at Tamarind Lithography Workshop, 1963-65, founder of Gemini Ltd. and Gemini G.E.L., 1965-66, and Tyler Graphics, 1974-75. Tyler is one of the most important figures in the history of printmaking in this half of our century. The connection between him and Gilmour is an unlikely one, but it is rooted in an important intersection of commerce and scholarship. In 1973, after eight years at Gemini producing prints of a size and technical virtuosity that successfully challenged this country's traditional approach to lithography, Tyler sold his collection of printer's proofs to the museum in Canberra. (The irony that he found his buyer many thousands of miles southwest of the major American museums which should have bought this now priceless collection will not be lost on anyone making prints in California.) The proceeds from this sale allowed him to start his shop in Bedford, New York, where he escalated his exploration of print- and papermaking technology, a process of discovery that has not yet abated.

Eight years after the sale, in 1981, Gilmour found this collection awaiting her, and with it the opportunity to examine critically the career to which her new employer had provided such a financial boost. In 1985 she produced the exhibition, "Ken Tyler, Printer Extraordinary", and book, *Ken Tyler Master Printer and the American Print Renaissance*. Her publication not only put Tyler's accomplishments in their proper historical and critical contexts, but also brought a pommie's perspective to the East Coast-West Coast cultural wars that found one of its many battlegrounds in the making, selling, and exhibiting of contemporary prints.

A member of neither camp, Pat Gilmour held both sides to her own rigorous standards, a practice she has continued in her lecturing and writing ever since, most pointedly in her numerous book reviews published in *Print Collectors' Newsletter*, *The Tamarind Papers*, and *Print Quarterly*. She now has in production several major articles, at least one exhibition for the millennium, and two books, one on Picasso and his printers and the other on Auguste Clot, the French master of color lithography in the late nineteenth century. We can expect both books will continue her characteristic practice of dispelling the myths of the past with facts and common sense.

Robert Conway was president of Associated American Artists during Gilmour's years at the Tate Gallery and the National Gallery of Australia. He returned from New York to his home in California in 1990, where he has worked as an independent dealer and consultant to private collectors and museums. Multimedia projects for Yale University and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco led this year to a position as Vice President of NextMonet.com, a leading on-line gallery for original contemporary art.

It's a Collaboration: An Interview with Sheila Marbain

By Sandy Walker

In 1996 I was introduced to Sheila Marbain by someone who thought I might like to make some prints with her. Little did I know at that time that I was being introduced to one of the rare and secret treasures of the art world. Sheila is unknown mostly due to her natural reticence and lack of interest in self-promotion.

Sheila and Ary Marbain created Maurel Studios in 1955 in New York City as a custom screen printing shop specializing in printing with contemporary artists. From 1948 through 1950, Sheila studied at Black Mountain College in North Carolina with Joseph Albers, Ilya Bolotowsky, and Willem de Kooning; Ary worked and exhibited as a painter in France for many years. With the sudden death of Ary in 1963, the studio was closed for a year.

Sheila decided to modernize the workshop with the introduction of screen photography and a new vacuum printing table. By 1965, Maurel Studios had reopened and Sheila was taking on the challenge of printing three-dimensional objects: a Plexiglas airship for Lichtenstein; an Oldenburg soft drum set; a set of dominoes with Fahlstrom; a large fabric banner with Marisol; and many other projects. She also worked collaboratively with Rauschenberg, Frankenthaler, Motherwell, Segal, and Wegman, to name only a few. Rutgers University's Zimmerli Art Museum organized an exhibition titled "Sheila Marbain as Master Printer: A Twenty-five Year Retrospective," honoring Marbain's considerable contribution to the screen printing medium, particularly its experimental aspects.



Sheila Marbain at Maurel Studios working on prints by Sandy Walker. (Photograph by Robert Dance)

Marbain's enthusiasm in helping artists to explore new aspects of printing led, in 1990, to the development of a technique of screen monoprinting. With this technique, the artist draws directly on taut silk with a wide variety of materials: graphite pencil, wax crayon, colored pencils, pastels, oil sticks, and so on. The image is then printed using a wax medium which both releases the pigment from the silk and transfers and seals it onto the paper. Encaustic is an ancient method of suspending pigments in wax and Marbain has now incorporated this medium within silkscreen printing. Wax is richly luminous and the resultant prints have a translucent quality. Marbain's screen monotype is unique, a process by which the artist can achieve effects distinctly different from those of any other monotype methods. Its simplicity encourages a spontaneous approach.

I interviewed Sheila in her studio overlooking Canal Street in September 1999. At present her studio is in a corner of a larger print shop, Brand X Editions.

Sandy Walker: Tell me what you said again, you would not let the artist have you make a separation?

SM: Absolutely. I would insist that the artist give his or her own. I don't think it's right. It becomes a reproduction. It's not a print. And I don't do reproductions, I send them over to Brand X Editions. And what they are doing are reproductions. There's a distinct difference.

For the artist, making a print should be as much of a creative

effort as making any kind of original art, whether it's a painting or a drawing or whatever. The only difference is that the artist has the collaboration of the printer.

SW: How would you define that collaboration?

SM: It varies. The printer knows the techniques. It's the printer's job to give the artist as clear an image of how it will look or how it should proceed, as possible. It's the printer's job to open up areas. I used to show other prints to artists coming in, so that they could see the variety of choices that they had, and so they could get ideas of possible other ways of doing things. I show them as much as possible. I try to find out where the artist wants to go, and then I follow him or her. I'm probably one step behind all the time.

SW: What about the fact that there are certain things that you've been doing for years and years and years. Lets say I come in here and I don't know how to do it at all. Even if you show me, I'm clumsy. There are things that I don't or can't do.

SM: Not really, because the work you're doing is drawing or painting on the screen, as opposed to working directly on a piece of paper. It's really not much harder for you to do that. The only possible area where you run into problems is visualizing how it will look as a print. And I don't always know either. We have to explore. It's an exploration for both of us each time. I don't care how many times I've done it, it's always different. And that's what makes it interesting. If it became routine, I wouldn't care anymore.

SW: So you're really interested in the creative moment. Printmaking is just another medium, just like any other instrument.

SM: Exactly. I get a chance to share it, which is truly exciting. That's what it's all about.

SW: I know exactly what you're talking about because I've worked with you. It's clear. But tell me, what do you think about editioning prints?

SM: Once you've got the one proof, then the excitement is really over. It becomes a technical exercise, you try to keep the

edition consistent and good. But it's a different avenue, it's a little more mechanical. You have to pay attention to all the details, and simply make sure that the original content is continued throughout the edition so it doesn't slack off or you don't lose interest.

SW: That's "you" as the printer.

SM: Yes.

SW: When you're editioning, you take over, don't you? Does the artist still work with you on editioning?

SM: It depends. Usually, the artist gives you the prototype and says, "I want a hundred of these." Generally there's enough trust, so I know what the artist wants and what can be done.

SW: You and I haven't gotten involved in an editioning process, but if I wanted you to edition a print for me, I'm sure that I could not edition it as well as you. I'd have to be an apprentice for a long time.

SM: I wouldn't expect that. I'm the printer. You hand it over to me. That's my job, and I will print it for you. There's no reason for you to print it, especially since, as you said, you couldn't do it as efficiently. It's mostly skill and experience, and paying attention. It isn't the same creative experience as it is in making the first proof. That's a different operation completely. Even Picasso used Mourlot and Sons—he would make his plates and Mourlot would print them. Picasso had no intention or any inclination to do his own printing. The same with his ceramics, he didn't mold the vase, he would change the shape maybe. It's a collaboration.

SW: The whole production?

SM: Yes, but on many different levels. There is the artisans' skill of printing, and there is the artist creating the image.

SW: Well, would you say that there are printers and then there are printers, so to speak: high quality printers who are simply skilled at reproducing and then other printers who are more involved in the creative process?

SM: Oh, absolutely, sure.

SW: And would you create a hierarchy between those, or would you simply say that you like one better than the other?

SM: There's a place for everybody. I'm also a highly skilled printer, but the ability to work with an artist is a very special one, and a very private and personal one, and often quite difficult.

Maurel Studios is located at 75 Varick St., New York, NY 10013.

Inside the SFMOMA: An Interview with Janet Bishop

By Sandy Walker

Janet Bishop is the the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Her recent exhibition projects include "Present Tense: Nine Artists in the Nineties" and "SECA Art Award 1998: Chris Finley, Gay Outlaw, Laurie Reid, and Rigo 98." She is currently working on a collection presentation called "Fact/Fiction" and is part of the project team for the large-scale contemporary art exhibition, "The New Century," which will open in spring 2001.

Sandy Walker: Before we begin, could you tell me something about your background, what school you went to or how you started your career at SFMOMA?

JB: I've been at SFMOMA for eleven years. My first museum job was at the Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell, and prints were very much a part of my early professional experience. I was a paid intern at the Johnson and worked there during school and full-time afterwards for a while, first in the public relations department and then with the print collection under Nancy Green, the curator there. I spent most of my time matting and housing prints. The Johnson's print collection is very good, and it was a great opportunity to look at things very closely. After Cornell I went to Columbia for graduate school, and got my master's in art history. Bob Blackburn was teaching in the art department then. I took a lithography class from Bob and also helped him out downtown at the Printmaking Workshop. I worked on cataloging their collection, which was really huge and unwieldy and wasn't in any particular order, so I was the volunteer collection manager. I barely scratched the surface because they didn't have much money for materials or a computer to establish a database. I really liked being at the workshop, though, being around the collection, the printers, and the artists who were working there, and occasionally using the presses myself.

SW: So all of that time you were in contact with prints and your belief was that it would be good to have the hands-on experience?

JB: Yes. It was both for personal pleasure and to understand the process of how the objects I'd been working with were made. Since print processes are not necessarily intuitive, it was an interest of mine to find out about them.

SW: How about your career at SFMOMA?

JB: When I started at SFMOMA, I was working as a curatorial assistant with the four collecting departments: Architecture and Design, Painting and Sculpture, Media Arts, and Photography. I became an assistant curator in the Painting and Sculpture Department in 1992, and the associate curator in 1997. So I've been working specifically in the Painting and Sculpture department, which includes drawings and prints, for about seven years now.

SW: What about the museum and its four departments? One of them is Photography, but that does not include printmaking in the setting at SFMOMA like it did at Cornell. Printmaking falls into the Painting and Sculpture domain. Tell me, what do you think about that? How does that work?

JB: The reason why prints and photographs were lumped together at Cornell is mostly because they were stored the same way so it was convenient to have them located in the same department. Graphics are part of the painting and sculpture department here because they tend to have been made by the same artists who are represented in the collection by painting or sculpture. We have a rich collection of Diebenkorn paintings and Diebenkorn prints, for instance. We don't have an entirely separate department for prints at SFMOMA because of the historical decision for two great San Francisco art collections—the Achenbach collection of graphic arts of the Fine Arts Museums and the photography collection that exists at SFMOMA—not to duplicate each others efforts.

SW: There was a "gentleman's agreement" between the two?

JB: Right.

SW: Do you feel you have a significant collection of prints? How are prints collected and how do you make your choices?

JB: I would describe the collection as modest. I wouldn't describe it as significant, although there are some significant works within the collection. I've had the pleasure over the years of working with the Djerassi collection of works by Paul Klee. There are over sixty Klee prints in the Djerassi collection, and we show them very actively—some portion of them are almost always on view. With acquisitions in both printmaking and in

drawing, it's the general practice to collect works by artists who are represented in the collection in painting or sculpture. We haven't made a large number of print acquisitions in the last couple of years, but we have brought in some wonderful works. Glenn Ligon's suite of etchings that focus on runaway slaves, for instance, was a relatively recent acquisition.

SW: Are there any other significant print purchases that you've made in the last few years?

JB: We purchased a great portfolio of Martin Kippenberger lithographs last year—fourteen works based on the "Raft of the Medusa." A few years back, a large Robert Ryman aquatint was a significant purchase. Though graphics often complement other work by a given artist in the collection, if an artist's primary medium is graphic, we are completely open to considering it for the collection.

SW: So what I'm hearing you say is that the substance is more important than the media?

JB: Absolutely. We're interested in the most interesting work that's being made. Most of our collecting activity focuses on contemporary artists. It doesn't matter what form the artwork is in. We're looking for the most interesting works that we can find.

SW: What I find contradictory in the description is that the curators of the departments are still divided by media.

JB: It's an old-fashioned way of structuring a museum. There are different areas of expertise among different curators at SFMOMA, but there are also overlapping interests between us. We recently brought in a group of drawings by Jorge Pardo through the painting and sculpture department. As work that incorporates the forms and aesthetics of functional design and architecture, though, the drawings could have just as easily come in through the architecture and design department. We have separate departments, but there are fuzzy edges between them. We try to be responsive to the very fluid way in which artists approach working with various media.

SW: Do all of you meet together as a group of curators to make decisions so that these overlaps are perceived? How does that work?

JB: We have curatorial program meetings where we discuss and shape the program together. It's a periodic meeting that is headed by our director, David Ross, in which we talk about both what we're doing and what we think we should be doing. There's a lot of informal dialogue, as well, since most of the curatorial offices are right here [on the third floor of SFMOMA]. I wouldn't say that it's always the case that everybody knows what everybody else is doing given the pace of things, but we often have shared enthusiasms.

SW: The only comment I wanted to make while you were describing this is that I wish that the Painting and Sculpture Department was the Painting and Sculpture, Drawing, and Printmaking Department. How would you feel about a description like that, or do you feel that there is a hierarchy in the media?

JB: Though the title does indicate the broad focus of the department, it isn't meant to be exclusionary—it is just a shorthand.

SW: That's nice to know from the CSP point of view. Do you mind my asking what your impression or opinion of printmaking today is? What are your observations about printmaking today, the state of printmaking or what you see happening in printmaking?

JB: What impresses me is the way artists use whatever medium suits their concept. I've seen some very interesting work in printmaking lately—both by artists who have been working with

prints for a long period of time and by artists who generally don't make prints but may have been invited to a press to think in a different way and explore the potential of different mediums. There's really interesting work going on in all kinds of mediums.

SW: Well, that's consistent with how you described your role. Nothing particularly jumps out to you in terms of printmaking per se as much as there are certain artists who use printmaking as an important expressive mode. Nobody really comes to your mind as an advancing printmaker.

JB: I'm not thinking of a particular person so much as a general practice among artists who use whatever medium that best suits their ideas or intentions. I see printmaking as one of the many possibilities for artists and one that's often really interesting and compelling.

The Independent Printmaker: An Interview with Karin Breuer

By Sandy Walker

Karin Breuer has been at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco since 1985 and is a curator at the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts. Past experience includes being a research associate at the Los Angeles County Museum of art and curator-in-charge at the Robert Gore Fikind Foundation in Beverly Hills.

Karin Breuer: For my February 1999 talk to the CSP at its annual meeting, I selected the topic of the changing status of the independent printmaker over the past fifty years and concluded, not very optimistically, that the future doesn't bode particularly well for the mainstream promotion of independent work and, in my opinion, it doesn't bode particularly well for prints in general within the context of mainstream art promotion in the United States.

As a curator at the Fine Arts Museums (FAM) I have been very sensitive to criticism from local printmakers that we don't show enough independent work in exhibitions at the Legion of Honor and De Young museums. Apparently in the 1960s, there were regularly scheduled exhibitions of the CSP, but that ended in the 1970s. There have been a few shows devoted to local printmakers at FAM, but the majority of them have been devoted to the so-called artist/printmakers who collaborate with print workshops in making prints. Meanwhile, there are very few among the critics who recognize that the Achenbach has regularly collected the works of many independent printmakers, especially Bay Area printmakers. We have a good, representative collection of the work and we are proud to have it in the collection. That doesn't necessarily satisfy our critics, however, and it all came to a head when we acquired the Crown Point Press Archive and we did a major exhibition with the National Gallery in 1997. That same year we began to do regular exhibitions of prints by Johns, Lightenstein, Rauschenberg, Oldenburg, etc. from the newly acquired Anderson Graphic Arts Collection in the dedicated Anderson Gallery at the Legion of Honor. It all seemed as if we were ignoring what was going on locally with independent printmakers.

Then, in 1997, during the run of the Crown Point Press exhibition, I became very dismayed when I was asked by an instructor at a local art school to introduce the show to the freshman class and take them on a behind-the-scenes tour of the department and into the exhibition to talk about the different ways that artists used intaglio techniques to create prints. I could tell that there was



Karin Breuer

some interest, but that for the most part, the kids didn't think that the prints were all that important. They were going to be painters, or video artists, or something else. Afterwards, I called the printmaking teacher at this school and told him that I was very worried about the future of printmaking with young artists who seemed so disinterested in it. His response was not reassuring.

So, I started thinking about the criticism by independent printmakers that we weren't doing enough to support them, and that there was perhaps a new generation of young artists who weren't interested in printmaking at all. I started thinking about what attracted me to prints in the first place, and how and why I've drifted away from that initial interest that was so involved with *process*. All of us have come to printmaking because of process: the hands-on process has been in the tradition and been vital for hundreds of years. We, curators and printmakers, have all come to printmaking with a love for process and art.

SW: Could you describe again, as you did so well at the CSP annual meeting, your roots in printmaking?

KB: Yes, I was in graduate school in art history at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, which has a strong printmaking department, during this whole period when the whole business of the artist who was not a printmaker making prints was becoming an issue. Those prints were featured as the art to buy. Long-term independent printmakers struggled in the marketplace. I think to that generation, to those artists, who came of age because of Hayter and chose that discipline because of Hayter's teachings, it was hard enough to proselytize for printmaking, let alone even try to encourage a marketplace for it. And then to see it totally usurped by artists who did not have that kind of a background was a real crisis for a lot of artists. I couldn't see where it was going to go and neither could the artists I spoke to. A lot of them felt that the woodcut in particular would come back as a medium, that artists would be interested in it again. Others said, "The fiber feeds the future. It's here. I'm not going back to woodcut. I just don't have the time or the energy to get it. It's a dead art form." At that point, Jim Dine and Helen Frankenthaler started working with wood at the collaborative workshops, and a kind of mini-revival occurred in the area of color woodcut.

SW: That was the kind of language that we were exposed to in those days. Painting was dead, along with everything else. An interesting sequel is the fact that people continue to exercise these forms in spite of the pronouncements.

KB: We're all in the same boat together—the fact is that printmaking, in general, is ignored in the mainstream art class.

SW: I asked the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) why it doesn't have a print collection per se. The answer that I got was that, a while back, there had been an agreement, sort of a division of domain, and that the Achenbach was the print collection. Therefore, the Modern did not collect prints because of a kind of gentleman's agreement.

KB: I've never heard that about prints, but I think that most museums don't care to compete with one another when one has such a strong collection area, such as the Achenbach has with prints. I know, in the 1970s, SFMOMA was buying portfolios of prints by Brice Marden, Sol Lewitt, and Robert Mangold. They have a collection of minimalist prints that they bought from Crown Point or Parasol. When Moses Lasky was on their Board of Trustees, SFMOMA did a print exhibition of his collection. I know there wasn't much of an interest, however, and they've never had a print curator. They've had registrars who have come in and people who have been hired to do some cataloguing of the prints, but that's about it. It's never been their emphasis and probably won't be.

SW: I can tell you the second part of their answer. They collect work by artists, not media. If the artist makes his major expression in print, they buy the prints. They didn't have an across the board policy. Again, this leads back to what we were talking about: printmakers versus artists who make prints. What do you think this does to the general climate in terms of prints, printmaking and the arts?

KB: It's true that when we write or talk about an artist's work, we often refer to his or her "primary" art form. When you talk about an artist's printmaking, you can't say it's a "secondary art form." Most artists who make prints don't consider it a secondary form of art-making, a lesser form of art-making. A lot of them tend to look at it as a kind of extension of drawing, for example. Many of them use printmaking as a way of getting through a problem or an idea that they were working out in some other media: painting or sculpture. It's an important part of their art making.

SW: What do you think establishes quality?

KB: For one thing, it's not whether an artist produces the print entirely by him/herself or whether there were technicians who assisted in the production of the print. High quality prints are made by independent printmakers and also by artists and their collaborators at print publishing workshops. Quality isn't necessarily determined by the techniques that were used either, but rather by how the artist used those techniques to make good art. I do think, though, that one can see a lack of quality in a print that was produced by a disinterested artist.

When I juried a CSP show,* I selected one piece that apparently had some elements of digital printing in it. The print I selected happened to be a combination print. The other prints this artist submitted were straight Iris prints and they were awful. But I believed he had done a good job with the combination print so I selected it, much to the chagrin of some CSP members. As long as the artist manipulates the technique and makes art out of it, that's what matters to me. It's not the process, but the form of expression. Our docents at the FAM are often preoccupied with the process of prints and how to communicate it to others. I sometimes think they get so bogged down in process that they forget the joy of talking about art and thinking about art, about the artist's point of view and the meaning of a piece.

SW: When we talk about a print, we often talk about a publisher. But who was it that worked with the artist? I thought it was interesting to bring them to the fore.

KB: When I wrote about Chris Brown's prints for a catalogue, he spoke about making prints at Crown Point and about how difficult it was to have printers standing in the background waiting for you to do something. He talked about his frustration of wanting to get in there and do the real art. It's really hard when artists start making prints for the first time and have to get into that groove of working with people in a workshop environment, as opposed to working alone in a studio. They've got the whole hurdle that a lot of artists have to overcome in order to make prints. The process of making a print is so tedious and long that the printers can make or break that environment.

SW: *And now, coming full circle to where we started talking about independent printmakers, it's interesting to me that you and I have talked the bulk of our time about the artists that work mainly with Crown Point.*

KB: In the environment in which I work, the presses get a tremendous amount of attention because they publicize their efforts. The art press and the art market are geared to focus on those kinds of productions. I have a hard time going out and seeing work that isn't produced by a press. We have artist portfolio reviews in the Achenbach and I occasionally ask where they are doing their printing. Most of the time they'll be using somebody's press. It's probably been close to fifteen years that so many galleries have stopped carrying prints in their inventory because they're so hard to sell. The prints are relatively inexpensive, so they just don't want to bother carrying them. They're certainly not willing to carry an artist who has a limited market.

SW: *So we're back to the situation of being driven by commerce. Even the choice of exhibits here is driven by commerce.*

KB: I think we've never left it. There are not too many venues for the independent printmaker anymore, except for regional centers and they typically deal with the artists in that region. There used to be a lot of regional invitationals that would really rate on the print scene. The Brooklyn Annual, for example, which is starting up again after years. The approach is different now, but those kind of invitationals and competitions used to get a lot more play than they do now. That seems to be the only mainstream promotional vehicle for independent artists.

SW: *Do you see any hope for this situation?*

KB: Maybe there's hope that independent printmakers will be encouraged by the fact that they're not so overwhelmed by the sort of art establishment productions anymore. Artist/printmakers who really love making prints will continue to make them and command high prices. But many of those who were not serious about it in the first place aren't making prints any more. As a result, there's a leveling off in terms of the marketplace. There's not so much of the disparity between \$500 prints and \$25,000 prints. The emphasis on media and technique is changing, it doesn't matter so much anymore how a print is made. It's what the print looks like and if the art is there, because that's the first thing I look for. I think a lot of curators feel the same way, that it serves no purpose to argue about what's a legitimate process and what's not. When those things are broken down, an artist can feel more relaxed about experimentation and deal more with technique.

Our efforts at the museum are about educating the public about prints and hoping that people will become interested in them and want to collect them. That's the battle that we fight and that's a big battle. The independent printmakers, publishers, and dealers and curators all have to help with this kind of education if they really want to win this battle.

SW: *Well, you have the strongest argument: your collection. Historically your point can't be denied.*

KB: It's true the Achenbach has a terrific collection. We've always been fortunate in many areas being able to acquire expensive prints through donations. That allows us to support other areas with just the same amount of attention but within our market.

SW: *Do you have to battle for exhibition space or opportunities?*

KB: Oh, definitely. So many of our colleagues do, too. Many of them have small galleries and if they're doing a big show they have to compete with other curators for space. In the new Legion that's a big battle for Bob [Robert Flynn Johnson] and me. We don't have a permanent gallery at the Legion dedicated to our department. Fortunately in the new De Young we will have two galleries devoted to works on paper. One of them will be devoted to the presentation of contemporary prints.

SW: *We as the general public want to believe that these institutions are non-commercial, the bastions of the non-commercial.*

KB: A lot of it stems from the change in funding. The NEA is down to nothing these days. We used to depend on them a lot to fund exhibitions. And corporate funding is down incredibly, as corporations look to other forms of charitable giving.

*Karin Breuer juried the CSP entrants for "Faultlines/Watermarks: California/Amsterdam," an exchange exhibition between the Amsterdams Grafisch Atelier and the CSP.

The Hidden Experience: An Interview with David Bonetti

By Sandy Walker

David Bonetti is the art critic for the San Francisco Examiner. He was interviewed in San Francisco in June 1999.

SW: *What is the state of printmaking in the Bay Area?*

DB: I really don't have a lot to say because there might be a lot going on, but I don't really know about it. I, of course, know about Crown Point Press, which is a real treasure in San Francisco. In the future when people look back on the last half of the twentieth century in San Francisco and wonder what was important in that culture, one of the most important things will be the activities of Crown Point Press. They have made wonderful prints over the years. They have brought important artists from all over the world to work here as well as working with local artists. That is one of the most important things that's gone on here in the last twenty-five to thirty years.

Printmaking is almost a hidden experience because so little of it is shown in the museums and galleries. The major modern art museum in the city has shown absolutely no interest in works on paper. I've quizzed them about it, and what they've said is, "We are a museum of limited resources, and we have established a Department of Architecture and Design and we've established a Department of Media Arts. We are only interested in prints and drawings if they're by artists that we have established an interest in with other media."

For instance, they recently acquired something like thirty-five drawings by Wayne Thiebaud. They have several paintings by him, and they are interested in acquiring more. So they will keep their interest in his prints and drawings. But in editioned prints, they don't seem to have an interest in them unless they are by an artist that they already have a connection with. The other major museum, the Fine Arts Museums, is primarily interested in historical works on paper. They have acquired the Anderson Collection, which is sort of making up for lost time. I am really glad they have it, and I am always pleased to see the exhibitions drawn from it.

But there's not a lot of prints in the museums here, whether by local, national, or international artists.

SW: *You have talked about the climate in Boston and compared that to here. Do you want to reiterate that?*

DB: I moved here in 1989 from Boston, which was, in comparison to San Francisco, a city that was very much interested in works on paper and prints. The museum there is very active in collecting works on paper and has one of the great works on paper collections in the world. Many of the commercial galleries there were primarily print galleries, or had a major interest in prints, and many of the collectors there were print collectors.

The gallery that I worked for in the late 1970s—the Thomas Segal Gallery—showed many different media, but it always had prints. People would immediately come to purchase the prints before they were gone or before the prices went up. The disadvantage there at that time was that people in Boston tended not to be interested in collecting painting and sculpture. The only area where they seemed to be interested in keeping up with the latest development was in prints.

SW: *So it's almost an inversion in that you do see the interest in painting and sculpture here? Do you see it on the private level?*

DB: This has never been a city where people or museums collected art. There have been a couple of exceptions—photography for instance. There have been fabulous photography collections here. San Franciscans, with a few exceptions, didn't collect art. They put their money into the opera and they put their money into fashion. People here bought art as decoration for their houses, and they

often didn't care if they had reproductions or not. Look at catalogues, at Butterfields, the local auction house, where the Fine Arts Museums has divested itself of works it no longer wants, and you'll find dozens of bad paintings, many of them copies, of scenes in Venice. That's all that San Franciscans really wanted. It's only in the last ten or fifteen years that things have changed—changed in a very big way, and there are some very wealthy people here who buy very expensive objects. These people have educated themselves, and they really know what they're interested in. They're forming distinct collections. But they're not interested in drawings or prints, for the most part, from what I've seen.

SW: *Why is that?*

DB: Well, drawings and prints are quiet. They require a level of connoisseurship that nouveau collectors are not prepared for.

SW: *Is it an issue of education?*

DB: Well, of course, it's an issue of education, but they're not going to be getting an education in prints when the museums don't consider prints a high priority.

SW: *So it goes back to the museums again.*

DB: Isn't that where most people get their exposure to art? Very wealthy people don't have to get their information primarily from museums. They have access to all sorts of sources—dealers and curators, and other collectors who travel endlessly to museums all over the world. But the average person gets his/her first knowledge of art through a museum.

SW: *We're talking about a few very wealthy people buying paintings and sculptures by modern masters. Why aren't there young collectors who are happy to buy a less expensive work of art and build a collection that way?*

DB: In San Francisco, those people buy photography, and San Francisco has some of the best photography galleries in the country. The Museum of Modern Art has an excellent photography department that always has exhibitions. Right now, they've got two major simultaneous exhibitions, Carleton Watkins and Daido Moriyama, two very different photographers from two different centuries, two different countries. And on a regular basis, you can count on seeing a major photography show there. So that's what people are savvy about.

SW: *And perhaps photography is by its nature more accessible to a new collector.*



David Bonetti

DB: San Francisco photography collectors are very conservative, for the most part. They buy traditional photography. In the larger world, there are many divergent voices in photography now. It's not necessarily so easy. Photography is just as complex and rich a field as prints.

I think that one of the interesting issues in printmaking is whether, in some cases, it really is a secondary expression, while in others, it's a major expression. This discussion isn't going on at all in San Francisco because there's no place for it to take place. The place where it would go on is in the museum. Since they don't have many print exhibitions, and since the curator of prints at the Fine Arts Museums, which is the one institution that does collect prints as a medium, is hostile towards contemporary art unless it's figurative, you don't get this kind of discourse at all. This topic is something that back in Boston people did talk about. People there were very savvy about the status of the print, about whether it was a fresh expression or just an inexpensive alternative to a major work. People here don't even know that this is an issue.

SW: *But, in fact, the interesting thing is if you read the history of printmaking, or even the last thirty years in printmaking, there's an awful lot of work beside Crown Point that has taken place here. Fortunately, there is a larger number of significant presses here, more than anywhere except New York. What is curious is that they're not building support for the art of printmaking.*

DB: Let's be frank, the museums here have been terrible. They've been working really hard in recent years to improve. It's rather late in the game, of course, especially if the Fine Arts Museums want to

purchase Old Masters paintings. The Los Angeles County Museum has been spending a lot of money for Old Master paintings, more than most people realize. Thank God the Fine Arts Museums have the collection it already has. But its curator and the director there are more sophisticated and professional than their predecessors. They're looking and they're thinking in critical ways about how to build a comprehensive collection with limited acquisition funds.

SW: *Why do they pick the artists that they pick? The Fine Arts Museums, why do they right now have a Oldenburg show?*

DB: Who else? What would the alternative be?

SW: *Well, good question. Let's see, who would be a significant printmaker today, who should be shown, as opposed to a famous artist who makes prints?*

DB: The gallery at the Legion of Honor is devoted to the Anderson Collection, and so the work in that gallery is drawn from the Anderson Collection. Even though it includes over nine hundred prints by many artists, the curators are not totally free to go out and do any show they want. It has to be based on that collection. And that collection is mostly big names. Besides, Oldenburg is a major printmaker. He has thought independently about the nature of the printmaking medium. His prints are not just repro-

ductions of other work.

SW: *Karin Breuer of the Achenbach is very sympathetic to the art of independent printmakers. What she told me was, in essence, that she would love to show the broad base of printmakers here, but they will not draw the crowds that the museum must have to draw.*

DB: Well, that's all museums' problem today, except for a handful of museums that can get away with doing what they want, like the Getty. They don't have to worry about who's going to come because they're coming anyway, and they have the money to do it.

SW: *How do you decide what to review?*

DB: The papers here are woefully inadequate in their coverage of cultural issues, except for movies and television. They are very thorough with star profiles. Movies are always going to be covered in the newspaper because they take out the most expensive ads—that happens everywhere, the *New York Times* as well as the smallest papers. It goes without saying, movies will always get the most coverage because of the advertising and television, too, because that's what most people experience. But I think it also is a fact that movies are the local field of expression, movies are made in California. In other arts, there's thorough coverage of the opera here in San Francisco. From around the world people are aware of San Francisco's opera. It is still the second largest opera house in the country. It has always been a point of pride to the people of the city. Most newspaper coverage of visual arts is of museum activity, and until recently the museums here have been terrible.

SW: *What's your take on Thomas Albright and his writing before you came to the Bay Area.*

DB: I haven't thought about Thomas Albright in a long time. I thought he was too boosterish. Many people on the San Francisco scene do not want to change, but the scene has changed because of necessity, in the same way that our whole world has changed, because of communication. You can fly anywhere easily, you can see images beautifully reproduced in books, newspapers and even the internet. That probably changed the art market. San Francisco's moment of pride was the 1950s when all of these means of communication didn't exist. It had established a great opera house, it had its own artists, the only city in our country outside of New York that had modernist artists who

produced modernist paintings.

Then the conditions all changed, but the art scene didn't change; it held on to what already existed. Regionalism died because there was no need for it anymore, because of improved means of communication. Albright seemed to me to be looking at the past, rather than looking to the future.

SW: *Are you aware of the other publishers-printers in this area?*

DB: I am familiar with the Arion Press. Then there's Paulson Press in Berkeley. What else?

SW: *Experimental workshop?*

DB: Oh, they still exist? That gallery I worked for in Boston had three major shows of work that was done there. I didn't think they existed anymore. We had great shows of theirs. We were the first gallery in the country to show some of the work done there. Wonderful handmade paper pieces by Robert Arneson and Roy de Forest.

SW: *Do you know about Kala in Berkeley?*

DB: I've heard about it but I've never checked it out.

SW: *What about David Kelso?*

DB: He's the one who writes nasty letters to the *San Francisco Chronicle* about Kenneth Baker. I think it takes incredible courage for him to do that. Unfortunately it's usually kind of nit-picking.

SW: *Do you get letters?*

DB: I get very little response to anything, especially from people in the public who are going to be dependent on a review. They might hate your guts, they might talk about you behind your back, but they're not going to write a letter to the paper damning you because they don't want you to turn on them in the future. It's human nature.

SW: *What do you think about that? Would you like them to write?*

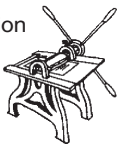
DB: It all depends. I like getting responses, sometimes negative ones are the best. The only letters I've responded to have been negative.

SW: *Well, you've become a symbol, you're the highlight, you're the engagement.*

DB: That's what it's all about, isn't it? You don't know if anybody saw your article, or if anybody had any reaction or not. So, when there is a letter, even if it's from a crackpot, I kind of enjoy it. If they're threatening my life, I don't like that; some people take these issues all too seriously.

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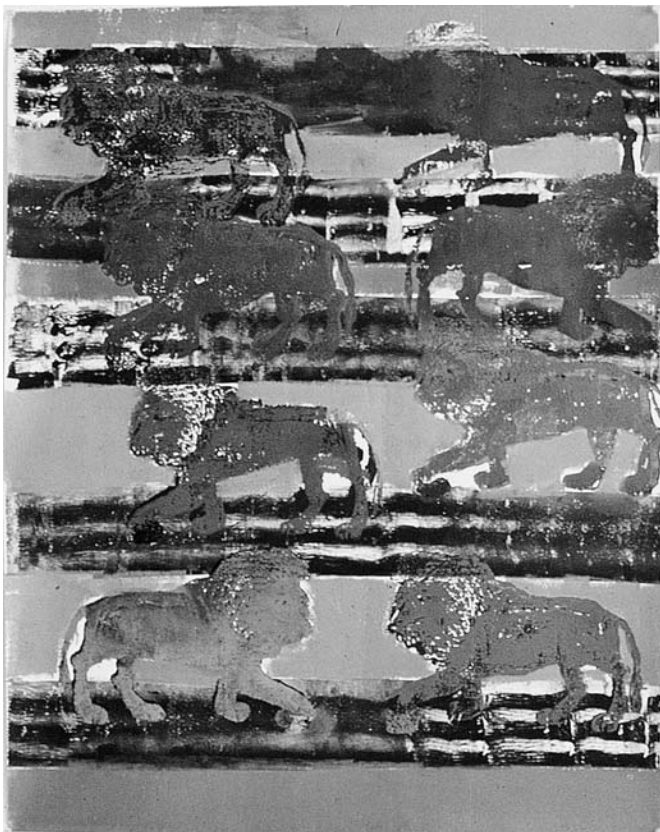
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ON CRITICISM: CSP ARTISTS SPEAK



Robert Brokl, *Lions, Stripes*, woodblock monoprint, 1999, 38" x 29" (Portrait photograph by Jean Eger)

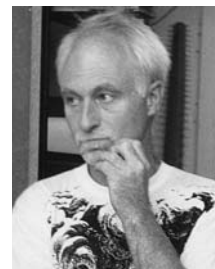
Robert Brokl

I've been praised and I've been slammed, and praise is better. Worst of all, and most prevalent, is the absence of either. The most painful attack was by Kenneth Baker in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. A mixed review by Charles Shere in the *Oakland Tribune* was comforting. Reviews out of the blue by people who don't know you and are just reacting to what's in front of them are the most satisfying of all.

Most artists I know avoid talking about each other's work directly. Why? Courtesy, fear, deception. (I exempt from this generality older artists I know.) It is, however, perfectly okay to discuss money—your prices, their prices, and so-and-so's prices. Is it any wonder shows are defined as successful by sales?

Can we abandon all hope of ever recreating an atmosphere like Bloomsbury where artists and writers created a lush "counter-culture"—commingling, publishing/self-publishing, reviewing, promoting, and illustrating each other's work, not waiting for the official venue or imprimatur?

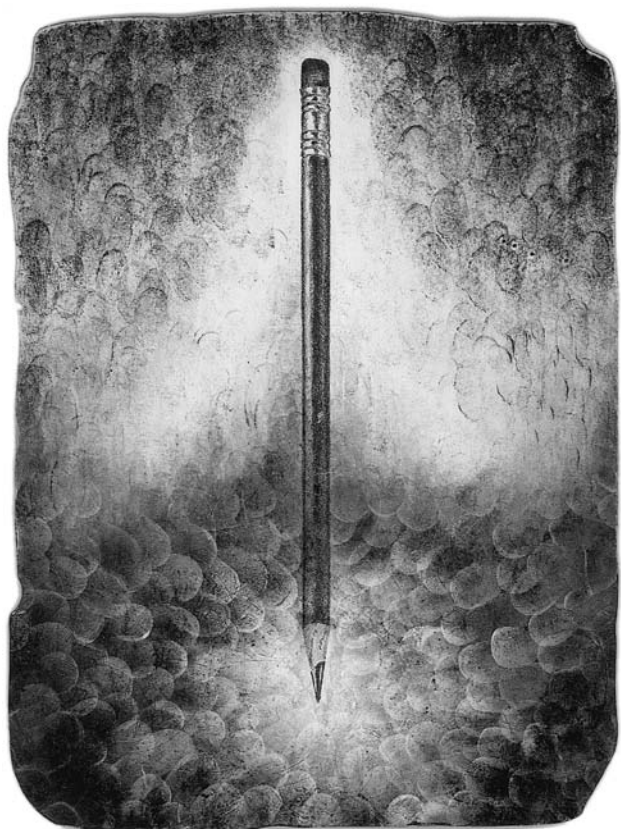
Artists give up too much power when they rely on critics to not only describe their work but to decide whether it's good or not. (Which often is code for "It's okay to buy.") Artists need critics and need to be critics, and words are in our toolbox.



Herlinde Spahr

When lightning strikes sand, it was long believed that its energy just dissipated. But apparently, the searing heat continues into the sand and leaves behind an imprint in the shape of a hollow, jagged tube of molten glass known as fulgurite. A great critic, like a great teacher, is one who shows you such a fragile, ill-formed object and then speaks of light, of intense heat and melting pain, of transforming into transparent glass when the world is of soot. It is rare for an artist and a critic to be on the same beach when lightning strikes.

Herlinde Spahr, Stations #11, lithograph and mixed techniques on Formica
(Photograph of work by Joe Schopplein; portrait photograph by Lieve Jerger)



ON CRITICISM: CSP ARTISTS SPEAK

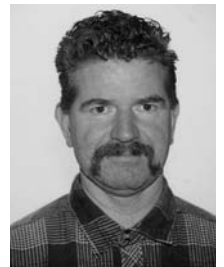


Daniel Robeski

I am much more likely to be disinclined to savor the drippings of the critic's tongue only because as an artist I instinctively react against any arbitrary assessment of my creative processes and products. Of course, I am as fickle as anyone and easily overcome my innate aversion to the critic's obsequious presence when the review is entirely and glowingly in my favor. We all lust for results. I am spared notice one way or the other for the most part by my own insignificance in this great bustling world of "ART." When one is young, hurt comes easily from sharp scrutiny; but not even being considered for scrutiny hurts more quickly and deeply still. I've arrived at my midlife content and even blessed to a degree living under no one's critical gaze. My own self-chastisements, however, more than fill any real or perceived voids. Critics and their criticisms are a very serious business; much too serious to my mind to waste any of life's short, precious time on. Unfettered and alive, I create and create again and again, ecstatic and completely unaware that there are any pens, poisonous or otherwise, that I might stoop to.

Daniel Robeski, *Postcards from Hell*, monotype, intaglio, chine collé, spray paint, 30" x 22"

This piece is mentioned in Lewis Girling's review of the "On the Edge of the Century" show.



Joan Finton



Who is the critic I like? The one who sees value in my work, of course. And what of the critic who finds my work not up to his (it is more often than not a "he") standard of excellence? Here is where I have to look at the context within which he practices his craft and decide whether to pay attention. "Paying attention" is what one hopes a critic does. I hope he is educated, smart, sophisticated, open, generous, funny, original, a lightweight in the ego department, and not a closet misogynist. I hope he realizes he may have the power to kill. I do realize that a critic has to say something, and may even have something to say. I hope he approaches his subject in a context of love—love of the genre for which he is a critic, and love of his own craft, words. His craft is not my craft, and he should be

respectful of that gulf.

A teacher is both critic and advocate. For some teachers, the power that allows them to be critics to seekers-after-the-light can become a "power trip." And that is dangerous. Any teacher worth her salt has to learn to marry criticism to appreciation, to challenge the student with insights that allow the student to develop, no matter how lacking in talent the student may seem to be. No teacher can know when an ungifted plodding student may make a leap of creative comprehension and do something amazing, thus providing the teacher/critic with an opportunity to clarify for the student what he/she has done so that creative growth can continue. Therein lies the real power of criticism.

The artist who, as a professional, need not be protected in the way a student should be, must accept the critic the way a convict accepts his jailer—possibly to be changed and rehabilitated by him, possibly destroyed, knowing the perverse thrill that the act of destruction can give, but ultimately abided. In a world where much critical attention is given to gimmicky, glamorous, overnight sensations, it is important that the artist hold on to his/her unique vision and understand that the critic inhabits a very different world, a world in which few artists would wish to live.



Art Hazelwood



Art Hazelwood, *Election Year Politics*, woodcut, 10" x 8"

The real question is why there is no criticism of printmaking in the Bay Area. It is not surprising to me that there is none. Museums show little interest in contemporary prints. Most galleries have nothing more than a few print drawers out of which to sell "corporate art." Print organizations seem mired in the simple act of self-perpetuation. Academia offers nothing but obfuscation. And artists seem primarily to indulge in self-aggrandizement. Perhaps this is an exaggeration, but the potential for the Bay Area print world is so great that one can't help but lament the sad truth of the moment. One need only look at the potential surrounding us with the many printmaking institutions to gnash one's teeth in frustration. A little cooperation would go a long way.

Why should critics bother to write about such a sad scene? My answer is that perhaps they are in fact the missing component. Perhaps with criticism might come focus and with focus, a lackluster scene with great potential might really become something great. Critics could serve to awaken us. Where are they when we need them?



A Conversation with Kate Delos

By Richard Whittaker

Kate Delos, artist, feminist, feminist artist, master printmaker, long-time member of the CSP, and teacher at many of the art departments in the Bay Area was interviewed by Richard Whittaker of *The Secret Alameda* in 1994. The interview is as relevant today as it was then and Delos continues to be an important and significant influence on the art of today. Kate Delos had been describing some of the efforts certain people in the Bay Area had made in the past to expand the exhibition opportunities for local artists...

RW: That leads to a larger question having to do with the function of artmaking in our society...and where it stands today...I don't know if that's of interest to you.

KD: It is. I've got a little quote on my desk at school: "Can art change society?"—a little blurb cut out of the New York Times. I look at it every day to see if I can work it into the class.

RW: So you've done some thinking about this?

KD: Oh, yes. From Constructivism on—the idea that there were these five and a half Russian artists who were going to change the face of the world through line, color, and form, and who were on a mission to do that. That was the idea of modern art. That, as artists, we were going to affect the world. Certainly, as I've grown up, everything I've seen has been a negation of that. From the Bauhaus idea that art was an integral part of life whether you were eating off a plate that someone had made or whether you were making a picture that was going to educate and inform people...that artists were part of a connected society. That was the ideal. What I came to find was that art was shunted off into the corner, into an isolated realm. Sometimes it was even hard for me to find artists to whom I could relate. We were so isolated and separated from society that we weren't able to see ourselves as an interactive part of that society. And the model in the fifties—abstract expressionism in this country—was that artists were isolated. They were existential beings separated from the rest of society, and their job was to prophesy to the world in an isolated existential fashion—and certainly, as an artist, you'd better be strong enough to live and stand alone because you weren't going to be able to find a community. If you were a woman or an artist of color, then you would probably never find someone with whom to share your sense of community. You had to be a strong enough individual to withstand your local peer group, become an artist, find a studio, and live in isolation.

RW: You had to be a hero.

KD: Yes. The idea was, "I can do this regardless." I don't care if it takes forty years of figure drawing! I can do this. (laughs) You had to have enough moxie, and you weren't going to get any help. When I was in school, those critiques told you that you weren't going to get any help as they wiped you across the floor each week. They said you're not going to get any help; you're going to have to do this by yourself. Well, that model is one thing, so then you grow up and you say, "Now I'm expected to be a responsible member of society, to get a job, take care of things, to contribute to my society." So how do you do this? I think I was lucky to be on the tail end of the 60s, to go into the Peace Corps, and to begin to be out there with some people who were asking the same kinds of questions, who could begin to provide me with hints for changing that model.

RW: What questions were being asked?

KD: How could we be responsible contributing members of society who would make wonderful art that would influence and change society, and be isolated, creative, neurotic, completely separate individuals? How could we do both of those things? A pretty difficult job. When I was at the University of California at Berkeley in 1969 and 1970, I had a class with Malaquias Montoya. He taught for years at the California College of Arts and Crafts (CCAC) in Oakland, California, and did public murals. He believed—in the best Mexican tradition—that art was a social force and that students should make murals and participate in political activity. Well, it just happened that he was teaching at Berkeley when I was there as a student. And when the anti-Vietnam protest was underway he taught everyone how to make silkscreen posters in about five minutes. We turned out hundreds of posters for several weeks. That was my first political-social activ-



Kate Delos with Prin Gramos (*study in white and study in black*), multiplate etching and aquatint, 1997, 10" x 10"

ity as an artist. I was also very aware that I was a fledgling artist and that I was really not comfortable making political images. There was a kind of naiveté to the way I could make political images. There are very skilled artists who can do that, and I was not that person. The way I did social service was by joining the Peace Corps, and all through my life, there has been that effort to try to do both things: be a responsible member of society and make art. I did lectures for free. I gave art away. I worked on committees. I did things, but my art was not necessarily used in a political way. I've always lived with that duality because the images I really wanted to make were not of a political nature. It was not a gift I had.

The women's art movement came along about that time and much art was being made about issues of a woman's life, femininity, and feminism. I made some art about those issues, and that made it possible for me to connect with the larger issues. But I still think my art is personal and idiosyncratic even though it touches women's issues. I lectured for years on women and the history of art, and I still do. I still consult on that and help people set up educational programs. Those issues are still important to me. The initial model for feminism was consensus. The idea was that nobody was judged, everybody was allowed a few minutes to speak and tell their story. It was hoped that form would prevent the kind of cultural competition that women had experienced as shutting off their voices. When I first got out of school I was part of a woman's art group. You sat down and talked about how you got educated and why you wanted to be an artist, and why you wanted to see your work and what you wanted to do with your work. You gave voice to those things. The other end of

it was that women should be able to be included in a larger public life, and the women's art movement also set up ways where that was happening. June Wayne, who was instrumental in revivifying lithography in this country through Tamarind Press, started something in the context of the women's art movement which was called "Joan of Art." It was a Saturday meeting where women artists got together, and someone showed you how to do slides, a resume, a portfolio, and how to get your work out there, gave you confidence to show your work to a curator, hang it on a wall, get it seen in a context outside yourself. This was before schools had, or when only a few schools were just beginning to have, gallery programs and business practices for artists. For instance, Cal never thought they should do anything like that. Their philosophy was, "We're here in the ivory tower to study art. We don't want to dabble in any of the applied concerns." Whereas CCAC, as a professional art school, had a course on business practices for artists.

RW: One of the things you were describing a little earlier was that you discovered you didn't have a direct wish to do political art.

KD: That goes back to the question, "What is art?" Is art communication? Art is communication, but I was probably young enough and egoistic enough to think that maybe the ideas I had were more important than some other ideas...and I wanted them to be communicated through my imagery. At the same time, even though that early model of isolation was there, I've never really believed that artists worked in isolation. They were always reading books and talking to each other and writing treatises and thinking about things and responding to their environment. The hope of contributing something has remained but sometimes one wonders. Right now, for instance, we're preparing to go into Somalia with military force, and I drive down the road listening to the radio thinking, "God, these things just never change."

RW: It's a real question isn't it?

KD: What I've learned as a teacher, what I've learned as an artist, what I've learned as a human being is that the twentieth century idea that we're all going to progress into one final, wonderful, beautiful world, and everything will be swell, is a bankrupt idea. That idea generated a lot of really damaging kinds of attitudes, particularly in art. One of those attitudes was the development of styles. When one "ism" died it would give way to another one.

RW: And underlying all that is the idea of progress.

KD: Yes. It's a kind of bastardization of the idea of progress that each new form is supposedly the next incarnation of progress. It's just not there. It's just a ridiculous idea. I mean it just leaves by the wayside all of those artists who are making art that doesn't fit into whatever style is being touted.

RW: That whole question of the idea of progress ties in with the premium on innovation.

KD: Yes. Innovation. The idea you're going to make something new and original, and that you're not connected to anything else. Again, the isolated artist making the new thing. That whole business underlies almost all our entire art education. You still see it. What's the new thing on the block? It's just everywhere. And so artists who are working in some personal, private way just have a hell of a time trying to get their work shown if it doesn't fit into that particular idea of what's in this year. An irony is that you still have to have that model of the isolated self-confident artist. That,

in spite of all that junk, I'll just do what I want. I'll just do it! We have been given a certain amount of help along the way—from the women's art movement to various other co-operative art movements—particularly in the Bay Area. When I got out of school there were many alternative art spaces, we hung up shows everywhere, anywhere there was a wall. It wasn't just women, but men too. You know, "We don't need the museums."

RW: What happens to all these artists who want their work to be seen, and it isn't?

KD: Many of them stop making art.

RW: You know what I mean? There are thousands of people here in the Bay Area making art, and there's really only room for a small percentage of them "in the system." And so, there are all these impulses and energies and efforts made by thousands for which, in a sense, there seems to be no place.

KD: Yes. It's really the structure of this society—which is hierarchical. It's really based on the economic philosophy of scarcity. The idea that there are only a few people with genius, only a few who can invent polio vaccine. According to Norman Bryson, a Yale art historian, since Giotto, we've been looking at artists with this idea of economic scarcity. We've been setting it up so that only a few get filtered through. And whatever other kind of artist you are will be of lesser importance. The entire market system runs on that principle. But what artists have been saying, probably most specifically articulated through some of the ideas of

post-modern deconstructionists, French feminists, and so on is: "Hey, wait a minute! That's not the only way to organize society. There can be other ways." The idea of making art, now, is that of using multiple viewpoints. In the fabric of the artwork itself is literally a sense of multiple points of view. Movies, jump cuts, collage art, assemblage and all that. Materials for making art come out of a multi-layered, multi-level sensibility. Because that's the kind of people we've become. And, if you just look at the pictures themselves, you couldn't possibly say that there's only one way to do it. One group of feminists says that you can contrast a vertical structure of making things where everything is pyramidal and comes up to a thin top with a horizontal, multi-layered vision of the world where things come in from many sources, and where there are many voices. It doesn't look like a pyramid. It looks like a musical score. Very simply, they've taken those two ideas and fleshed them out with individual sensibilities. They're trying to write that way, make pictures that way, and do history, philosophy and theology that way.

Richard Whittaker is the founder and editor of the art magazine, The Secret Alameda (TSA). The magazine metamorphosed into Works + Conversations. Richard's background in art and philosophy and his desire for cogent commentary on a variety of art-related issues has been the driving force of the magazine. Works + Conversations can be found at Bay area bookstores or by writing to P. O.Box 3008, Berkeley, CA 94705; e-mail: editors@conversations.org; or web site: www.conversations.org.

WHY DRAW A LANDSCAPE? KATHAN BROWN

This book talks about the relationship of the self to the real world, and looks at different approaches to landscape used by eleven painters and sculptors whose styles range from Realist to Conceptual. **Kathan Brown** is the founder and director of Crown Point Press, one of the nation's most influential fine art print publishers, and is the author of *Ink, Paper, Metal, Wood: Painters and Sculptors at Crown Point Press*, Chronicle Books, 1996. Her books come from a life spent in the print studio with working artists.

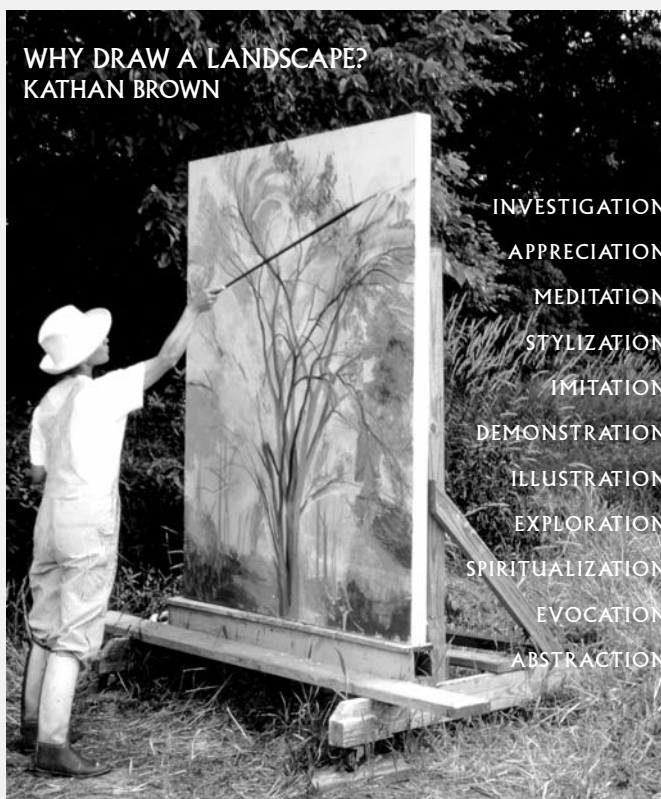
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Focus on a Printmaker: An Interview with Linda Lee Boyd

By Benny Alba

Linda Boyd, a long-time presence in CSP activities, not only has been selected to exhibit in many of the organizationally sponsored shows, but is also a major contributor to the on-going development of the organization. CSP president Dan Robeski has said, "Linda is a very fine artist whose pieces are quiet, like Linda herself, and yet a strong, intense energy is there below the placid surface." Meticulously detailed, powerful, and well thought-out, Linda's current prints are full-bodied portraits of very physical men in the trades—shoveling, pouring concrete, building. Previously Linda's woodcuts featured portraits, dogs, and still lifes. Linda has been exhibiting her work professionally since 1984. I asked Linda questions while visiting her, surrounded by her prints in her office/apartment.

Benny Alba: Why do you choose to focus on people?

Linda Lee Boyd (laughs): It started when I had a roommate with a difficult basset hound. Living with that dog was like living with a uncontrolled child. With the premise of "if life hands you a lemon, make lemonade," I made prints of him. It got me into graduate school!

BA: How did you start being interested in art?

LLB: After I got my BA at Cal, I was worked for a couple years at PG&E as a clerk. That helped me decide it wasn't what I wanted to do with my life. I had always drawn so I began taking art classes at San Francisco State including a woodcut class from Roy Ragle, and that was it. Roy Ragle was and is an incredible inspiration, both artistically and personally. He kept encouraging me to continue doing prints. Somehow cutting and printing woodcuts felt especially natural to me and you can see that so

much of my artistic expression comes from that moment.

BA: You now pull Roy's prints. How did that come about?

LLB: He has had health problems for many years. Eric Callies, another student of Roy's, started helping him print by hand, then Eric and I began working together when Roy bought a press and his condition deteriorated further. The prints are twenty-four-by-thirty-six inches per section in the larger works, finely cut, and mounted on plywood. Because of Roy's physical condition, he needed our help. Roy kept encouraging me to do my art. It was personal encouragement. I can't say enough about that. And printing his work is the least I could do.

BA: About your images. You also do still lifes. Why is that?

LLB: Portraits do not sell well. I start from a figurative point of view, not a commissioned one. Alice Neel, Lucian Freud, and earlier, Vermeer, are artists who made figurative portraits of individuals which became visual signatures of the artists and the style that they defined. Those are artists whom I particularly admire. Portraiture isn't like getting your photo taken. That is, unless you are talking about someone like Richard Avedon. I find people interesting to look at. It started with my family, friends, and co-workers. I always took photos with the idea of making prints of them.

BA: So you use a camera?

LLB: Yes, but it's because I'd rather have people I know be my models. They can't sit still long enough.

BA: What kind of camera do you use and what is the process of transformation from photograph to finished woodcut?

LLB: I just have an old Minolta 35 mm single lens reflex which I bought from a boyfriend who found it in the cab he was driving. He was putting himself through law school and needed the money. Nobody claimed the camera so I got it. I'm not a great photographer, but I try to get people when they are not aware of being photographed. I don't do a formal sitting. Out of a roll of thirty-six color pictures, over the years, I may use one or two photos or parts of them. I get them developed at a quick print place.

I use an overhead projector to enlarge the photo or part of it to get the proportions correct. Then I redraw it on another sheet of paper, working until it is right. After that I transfer this line drawing to the block using carbon paper. Before I cut, I do a complete drawing with shading so I know where the lights and darks are.

BA: Who are some of the subjects of your prints?

LLB: Well, I started out with my uncle—I've done at least four of him—and then I did my mother and brothers as well. After that, I went on to do co-workers such as the longshoremen and the guys pouring concrete.

BA: Did you know these men personally and individually or are the images simply intended as generic portraits of workers.

LLB: I worked with these men, so I knew them as well as one knows one's co-workers. These prints are observations of the men, but also I want to give a sense of how they feel about themselves and their work.

BA: You refer to this series as "the working men."

LLB: I was working part time as a bookkeeper for a contractor



Linda Lee Boyd, Pouring Concrete IV, woodcut, 1997, 24" x 22"
(Photograph by Gary Sinick)

and had to deliver the paychecks to the construction sites. Once they were pouring a concrete floor and I thought that it was very interesting the way they moved around with the concrete, the sluice, and the hoses, so I started taking pictures any time they poured.

BA: Let's focus on your woodcutting process. What tools do you use?

LLB: I use different techniques. I use electrical tools such as a Dremel, plus the the usual hand tools and wire brushes. The complete drawing takes the longest time. The cutting follows the drawing. If I get the drawing right, the cutting seems to be fairly easy.

BA: What wood do you use?

LLB: I use finish-grade birch plywood. Nowadays the manufacturers cut the veneer with laser tools so the surface is much thinner than older wood, making it harder to get the range of tones. But the blocks are still beautiful.

BA: Tools...tell me a secret you know about tools.

LLB: I don't have any secrets. I sharpen them every time I use them. And I use a razor strop in between to keep them in good condition.

BA: The positive/negative compositional aspects of your work are often striking. At times they are less visible on first glance due to texture. Do you focus on design, texture, or what are your primary concerns?

LLB: I need to define shape somehow or another. For example, in *Pouring Concrete IV*, I use simple lines to convey the idea of hair. I simplified the hair. These men are out all day without a chance to comb and their hair gets all over the place.

BA: What about your use of color?

LLB: I use it just to define the layers a bit. It gives perspective and depth.

BA: What colors do you use and why do you limit yourself to those?

LLB: I use mostly blues, grays, and browns. I want the color to be subtle, not the main focus. I am interested primarily in shape and texture and what they represent. I'm not particularly responsive to color in nature. I don't use color for expressive means as much as to differentiate areas of the print.

BA: Do you use a separate block for each color?

LLB: No. I avoid multiple blocks if I can as wood is expensive. I ink the whole block. The Claudia Chapline block for the CSP poster was from two blocks-blue and black.

BA: How many hours of hands-on work do you do in a week on the blocks?

LLB: My working hours are limited only by my need to earn a living. My art work doesn't sell enough to support me. It is my hope that someday it will. Needless to say, my process is very labor-intensive. The amount of time I spend on a block is partly determined by the size of the block since I work pretty minutely over every square inch. As for printing, it's about the same for each block. I use a Griffin etching press and my edition sizes are determined by how many prints I believe I can distribute. Art Hazelwood assisted me in printing the Claudia Chapline poster, which of course cut down on my normal expenditure of time and labor.

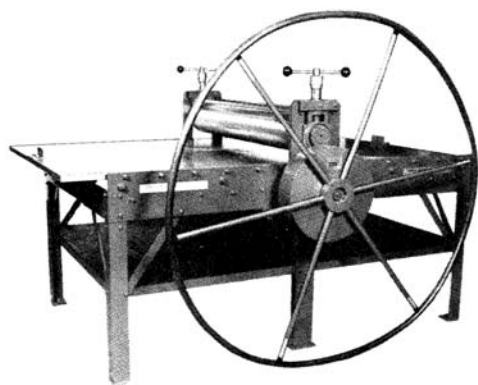
BA: What do you do to the block when you've editioned a print?

LLB: The blocks? People have asked to buy them at Open Studios when they see them as part of the demonstration. I wouldn't sell a block. But I just keep them in a safe place.

Benny Alba is an Oakland-based painter and printmaker who shows widely throughout the United States.

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Portrait of Two Bay Area Collectors: Harry and Herta Weinstein

By Robert Dance

Harry Weinstein was a passionate print collector. At the time of his death in early 1998, Harry and his wife, Herta, had put together, slowly and carefully over a thirty year period, a remarkable group of images tracking the history of Western European printmaking. Major works ranging from Dürer, Canaletto, Piranesi, Tiepolo and Blake, up to Picasso and Kollwitz in the twentieth century, line the walls and fill print boxes. Herta claims that the collection was put together without a particular focus, and rather blithely adds that they bought what was available and what was appealing to them. This modesty is as characteristic of Herta as it was of her husband. And, walking around the comfortably furnished Berkeley residence that is home to the prints and other works of art, I was momentarily taken in by her words. The prints framed and on display blend in so harmoniously with the domestic environment that until I looked at each one carefully I wasn't aware of the fine quality of each individual impression and the ambition of the collection.

Uncharacteristic of collectors, Herta acknowledges that a dealer helped them begin their odyssey of looking at, learning about, and purchasing prints. Long-time, and perhaps one can now say legendary, Marin-based print dealer Ray Lewis guided Harry, and later his wife, as he did many other individuals and institutions

across America. Herta acknowledges that a great source is necessary if one wants to acquire important works, and she is indebted to Lewis both for guiding the collection and suggesting other dealers and auction houses both here and in Europe.

Resistant at first to the notion of making a large financial commitment to this nascent hobby, Herta found herself acquiescing as she fell in love with each new acquisition. Psychiatrists by profession, the Weinsteins had no formal background in art history. Where Herta was content to enjoy the collecting process and the fruits of their buying expeditions, Harry became ravenous to learn as much as possible about the artists and his works of art. Off they went, attending courses in print history at the Achenbach and seeing every print exhibition, at first in and around San Francisco, later at museums such as the Metropolitan in New York and the National Gallery in Washington. Herta realized that she had lost her husband to his hobby when he decided to immerse himself in the study of German so he could read the scholarship on artists such as Dürer (Harry's favorite) in the original language. The couple, always inexhaustible travelers, now found themselves heading to the print rooms in cities such as Cleveland, London, Berlin, and Stockholm, where great enthusiasm and intelligence made them welcome guests.



Harry and Herta Weinstein

Like most serious collectors, the Weinsteins focused on acquiring rather than selling works. But Herta did recall the one time she became overwhelmed by the booming (and some might say overheated) late 1980s art market and convinced her husband to sell their set of Jasper Johns' *Fizzle* (the couple also put together a small but choice collection of contemporary American prints). "Harry moped about selling those prints," remembered Herta, "and I don't think he ever forgave me for insisting." "In fact," Herta continued, "Harry spoke about finding another set, but we never did."

The last purchase the Weinsteins made together turned out to be the capstone of the collection. Herta claims not to have any favorite prints, but she did describe in great detail and with extraordinary enthusiasm how she and her husband acquired an impression of the first state of Piranesi's *Staircase with Trophies* (Plate 7 of the "Prisons") to go with a second state impression purchased many years before. All beginning collectors, overflowing with newly acquired information and armed with confidence, want to make discoveries. Harry Weinstein was no exception so he scoured antique shops and small auctions.

At one such auction in 1980, Harry found what looked too good to be true, a fine example from Piranesi's landmark "Prison" series. He examined the print out of the frame and looked for a watermark. The paper appeared to be from the eighteenth century, and a visit to the local library confirmed that the watermark was consistent with those found on original Piranesi prints. Harry made the purchase. Years later when the artist's catalogue raisonné was published, Harry learned that he had acquired an early second state. Nearly twenty years later, Herta



Herta Weinstein with *Heimarbeit*, a lithograph by Käthe Kollwitz.



Herta Weinstein sitting under a print from Piranesi's "Prison" series.

spotted an impression of the rare first state at a local print fair—in the booth of old friend and mentor Ray Lewis. She rushed home to tell her husband the news. By then quite ill, Harry didn't seem keen on making so lavish a purchase. But, the thought of having both prints energized Harry. The print fair now over, Harry and Herta made the trip to Marin to examine and finally purchase the Piranesi. It was to be Harry's last outing.

Living with a collection that includes artists such as Baldung Grien, Millet, Delacroix, Gericault, and Pissarro, among many others, might be enough for most collectors. Herta Weinstein, however, still follows exhibitions and reads dealer catalogues and admits that yes, she did recently purchase two prints by the Flemish artist Anthonie Waterloo. Without her husband's guiding hand, she relies on her own lifetime of experience as well as the advice of trusted friends and dealers and her daughter, an artist living in New York.

A small but choice sampling of the collection was exhibited during the winter and early spring of 1998 at the library of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley in an exhibition titled: "Dürer to Delacroix: Old Master Prints from the Collection of Harry and Herta Weinstein." This exhibition, which turned out to be a memorial to Harry, underscored the great accomplishment of a lifetime of serious collecting. As the twentieth century draws to a close, and building a major print collection becomes more and more difficult, the achievement of Harry and Herta Weinstein seems all the more remarkable. Still, Herta brushes off such accolades. What she likes best about the collection is sharing it with others.

Robert Dance is a private art dealer based in New York City.

Art in the Digital Age: A Conversation with Anne Morgan Spalter

By Roxane Gilbert

Anne Spalter's new book is a seductively articulate and illuminating introduction to the rapidly expanding role of the computer in art, design and animation. Her book will become an essential textbook for art school curricula as well as a standard source for media-wise artists.

—Roger Mandle, President, Rhode Island School of Design

While some of us are still arguing about the impact of the computers on visual arts, Anne Morgan Spalter, artist-in-residence of the Brown University Graphics Group, Department of Computer Science, has written the definitive "How To" book on it. *The Computer in the Visual Arts* (©1999 Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.) is already being used as a textbook at schools including the Art Institute of Chicago, Pratt Institute, and the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Ms. Spalter gave us some thoughtful and thought-provoking answers to our questions about her background, the process of writing her book, and about the advantages and disadvantages of using the computer as tool in the visual arts.

RG: You have a math degree from Brown University and a painting degree from the Rhode Island School of Design. Which came first? How does your career in computer art fit into this picture?

AS: I began as a painting student at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). It's a great school and I loved it there, but in addition to the arts I had begun to really enjoy mathematics. I was taking some courses in the math department at Brown as a side thing, the way that most people take art classes. But after my sophomore year at RISD, I was told that I couldn't take any more math classes because I had already fulfilled my allotted number of "special studies" courses. I spoke with the head of the division of fine arts to see if some exception could be made, but was told "absolutely not—those are the rules." Someone told me that at Brown there were no distribution requirements and you could cross-register at RISD. I applied to Brown and started there as a junior.

I ended up with three majors at Brown: visual art, mathematics, and an independent concentration (another great thing about the Brown curriculum is the option to design your own major). The independent concentration culminated in a short novel that combined logical, verbal, and visual ways of thinking. When I started writing it, on my manual typewriter, I thought I'd never graduate because I was such a poor typist. I was up one night wondering if White Out came in gallon containers when a friend called to say that he has pressed a "print" button, and while he took a long shower his many-hundred page thesis had neatly printed out. My Grandmother gave me some money, and I bought a computer that week (a Mac 128K!).

Although I purchased it as a glorified typewriter, I soon realized that it could help me create images. This was incredibly exciting, and I ended up doing the visual part of my novel entirely on the computer. I was still not convinced that the computer was the way to go for artists, though. When I moved to New York City, I continued to use oil paint and sketch. It became harder and harder to do this, though, in the tiny apartment I was living in and in-between the long hours that I was working. (Our apartment had originally been a one-bedroom and previous ten-



Anne Morgan Spalter, Shape Factory, digital image

ants had divided it so many times that by the time we moved in, it was a three-bedroom apartment. The living room had no windows at all and we found our sofa on the street.) I was working in investment banking, believe it or not (well, it was the 80s...), and I had access to lots of nice computer equipment, including fast machines, graphics programs, and a color printer. I began to make images at work (a click of mouse could bring up an Excel spreadsheet). I could take them home on a disk and work on them there. It was compact and required no volatile spirits.

The experience increased my appreciation of the computer as an artistic platform and made me realize that I should continue my study of art rather than learn more about swaps trading and derivatives. I returned to RISD as a masters student in painting. The first day in my studio I stretched up a big canvas and went to work. At one point I made a big red mark on it and immediately realized that it was a mistake. In my mind I thought, "Undo." Of course nothing happened. The experience made me realize that although the computer lacked the tactile feeling of most traditional media, it had other features that were very powerful. I began to use the computer more and more and today use it almost exclusively in my art.

RG: Your book is a comprehensive resource for artists and graphic designers seeking to understand the concepts behind the software. It is now used as a textbook at the Art Institute of Chicago, Pratt Institute and the Fashion Institute of Technology. What other colleges are using it as a teaching reference? Who else should be using it?

AS: I know that classes at Otis College of Art, Purdue University Main Campus, Georgia State University, Long Beach City College and the University Of New Mexico are using it. I'm a little biased, of course, but I think that all computer and design program students should have this book on their shelves. It gives the big picture—how all the different types of software are related and how the technology has been used in the visual arts over the last thirty years. The book does this in the context of art and art

theory instead of separating the technical and artistic. The computer is a technically demanding medium, and understanding the concepts makes it a more powerful and expressive tool in the hands of artists and designers. Although it has many textbook elements (exercises, suggested readings, etc.), the book is appropriate for both professional artists and amateurs who are using the computer to create images. Artists and designers who were not trained on computers are especially in need of the type of information in *The Computer in the Visual Arts*.

RG: Why did you write a textbook rather than a popular market book? Do you have plans to follow up with a book for the popular market?

AS: Aha—I sort of started on this in the last answer. The whole story is that I was approached by a textbook division of a publishing company (not Addison Wesley) and asked to write the book. I hadn't even thought of writing a book, and I really had no idea what it would entail. I signed a contract before I had even written a table of contents. When I began to work on the project, I realized that I was in way over my head. It took me a year just to figure out what I wanted to cover in the book and several more to master the technical portions well enough to be able to explain them clearly. I wrote several drafts for this first company and then one day I arrived at work to find a voice mail message from their editor telling me that they were canceling my contract! I was stunned. They didn't think anyone would adopt the book. It was a very discouraging event and I almost gave up on the whole project. What kept me going was all the artists who had agreed to have their work in the book. There were dozens of people who had not only sent me slides and files, but had spent hours on the phone or over email discussing their work and their views on the field. I thought, I'll never be able to face all these people if I don't publish this damn thing!

I was fortunate to be working for Andy van Dam, one of the authors of the standard reference in the field of computer graphics, *Computer Graphics, Principles and Practice* (Addison Wesley Longman). He believed in my book and had been helping me work on it. He sent the manuscript to Peter Gordon, a publishing partner at Addison Wesley, and he actually took it home and read it. At first, they weren't sure if they would do it because the division does computer and engineering books, not art ones. But in the end, Peter and his colleagues took a leap of faith (for which I am very grateful) and signed me on. Addison Wesley Longman has been terrific to work with and the whole book-writing process became much more pleasant, even fun, after I signed with them.

So, I had structured it as a textbook for the first company, and then happened to hook up with a textbook division at AWL, so it came out a textbook. If you take out the exercises and readings and remove the numbering of the sections, it becomes much more like a trade press book. I would definitely consider writing a "lite" version that was for a more general audience, but the current book has a depth of content that I think anyone serious about this field will eventually need.

RG: The computer has indisputably become a highly utilized and indispensable tool for graphic designers. Is there resistance to embracing technology among fine artists and art aficionados? What are some of the problems faced by artists using the computer as a creative tool? What are some of the advantages to artists using the computer as a tool?

AS: There is still strong resistance to the use of the computer in the arts, especially fine art. In the fields of illustration and graphic design, the computer is much more common than in fine artists'



Anne Morgan Spalter

studios. As an example, I own a work by Richard Rosenblum, who is an amazing artist. It is the only art work by an at all famous artist I've ever purchased because it's the only one I've been able to afford. His sculptures probably go for many tens of thousands, but his computer prints are in the \$1,000 range. People are afraid they'll fade or that he'll print a zillion of them (actually he limits editions) or maybe galleries are afraid to put

too high a price on this untried new medium, especially given the problems with the very non-archival nature of most computer printing. But I think it's a great time to collect computer art. People should rush out and buy this stuff before everyone realizes that it is way undervalued.

RG: Will computers some day take the place of traditional tools in creating art? In a Washington Post article of June 9, 1999, David Ignatius writes of "a gifted computer scientist named Ray Kurzweil (who) has written a new book arguing that over the next thirty years, computers will progress to the point that their intelligence will be indistinguishable from that of a human being." Will computers some day take the place of artists in creating art?

AS: Well, I don't know about his computer, but mine is still incredibly stupid. I just hope that it doesn't crash while I'm in the middle of writing this—I'm not worried about its creating art without me. But seriously, I think that the computer will become a basic medium that students will learn, like the pencil, charcoal, the camera. For many designers it already takes the place of traditional tools. I don't think it will displace all traditional media, though, especially in the fine arts. There's something about the pleasure of using oil paint or pastels that one just doesn't get on the computer. Right now the computer is a very young medium. History will have to decide whether any great art works have even yet been created with it.

RG: How important are skills in traditional techniques to a computer artist? There are sometimes tradeoffs in the quality of the final deliverable created by graphic designers using computers as compared to those working in traditional crafts. Take for example the typesetting of books. Although the computer in the hands of a highly skilled designer can produce beautiful typesetting, many designers lack either the training or the time to use their software to its fullest capacity to create what many of the traditional typesetters did so well. There is compensation in the increased speed of production, decreased specialization, and increased economic viability. What tradeoffs might the artist face in creating art on the computer? When is it preferable to use the computer rather than traditional tools?

AS: This is an interesting question. Just this evening I had to create a diagram for a presentation. I started off trying to draw it in Photoshop. Even with a cordless, pressure-sensitive stylus, though, I was finding it hard. I switched to Illustrator hoping that more precise-looking and easily editable lines would help. Finally I gave up, drew the thing with a pencil on a small piece of paper and scanned it in. The pencil drawing took about ten minutes, while the fussing around with the computer programs had already taken a good hour. There are still no really effective programs for easy sketching. This is a research area for computer graphics.

For the actual presentation, though, the computer is essential. And while sketching isn't there yet, other aspects of the computer make things possible that just can't be done with traditional media: working with photographs, for example. The computer lets artists and designers paint with photographs, rearranging the compositions, controlling every bit of the image. This has changed the nature of visual truth and will undoubtedly have a profound and lasting effect on every culture that creates or consumes these images. The 3D world is also a revolutionary area. Three-dimensional graphics software lets artists and designers think rapidly and abstractly in 3D for the first time in history.

RG: Writing *The Computer in the Visual Arts* was an enormous undertaking. What projects are you working on now?

AS: It was a huge project and one that demanded sacrifices from me and everyone around me. My current demanding multi-year project is named Amelia! She was born in February and takes up pretty much all of my free time (what there was of it). One of the interesting things I am now working on is a research project to make choosing and changing colors in graphics software easier and more enjoyable. But mostly I hope to return to art making in the next few years and put to use all the things I learned while writing the book!!!

Roxane Gilbert, an artist and web designer, launched Art2u in 1997. She is editor of Art2u News and a contributing writer to NextMonet.com (www.nextmonet.com). In addition, she is an artist's assistant to Lowell Herrero, and a printmaker who has edited for Charles Gill, David Gilhooly, Christopher Brown, and the late Robert Arneson and Joan Brown. You can reach her by email at gil@art2u.com.

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Cooperative Galleries in General: The Washington Printmakers Gallery in Particular

by Carolyn Pomponio

The Washington Printmakers Gallery (WPG), located in downtown Washington, D.C., was founded in 1985 by a group of local printmakers who had the vision and energy to put together a gallery which not only celebrates the original print, but which has become a stunning example of how a cooperative art gallery, using a clear-cut protocol and sound methodology, can be a major player in the art scene of a major city. WPG is not only an attractive and successful forum for its artists and their artwork, but, at the same time, it emphasizes the fact that a cooperative gallery, if done right, is not only easily attainable, but can be a healthy alternative to the more fiscally risk-plagued commercial galleries. Based on sound economic principles, the Washington Printmakers Gallery has been carefully structured to withstand the vagaries of economic fluctuations and aesthetic whims. It is a balanced, fiscally conservative, artistically liberal, well-planned small business focused on the dissemination of information about the history and future of the original print and the display and sale of its members' artwork.

Cooperative Galleries: Good, or Not So Good?

In the recent past, I have read articles by writers in the art field which have painted the cooperative art gallery as being a sort

of vanity forum for artists who may not otherwise have an outlet for their art. Using a broad brush, these articles have pictured the cooperative art gallery as a showcase for mediocre work, unprofessional presentation, low standards of quality, uneven group exhibits, and a membership based on pocketbooks instead of on portfolios. There probably are a number of cooperative art galleries that fit this image. Obviously, if a gallery's infrastructure—the mission, the operations, and the product—has not been thought out carefully, and if the process of putting the gallery together has not been carried out thoughtfully, then the final result will be lacking, and you will have a mediocre gallery.

On the other hand, if the cooperative art gallery has been designed with attention to artistic and economic detail, and if the gallery focus has been initially well-defined by its founders, then there is every reason to believe that the gallery will not only be successful, but that it will be wildly successful and will literally fly! With sound consideration given to its foundation, the cooperative gallery can be a wonderfully innovative, beautifully energizing showcase for its artists, as well as a smoothly running, economically sound small business. Let me tell you how the Washington Printmakers Gallery achieved this.

The Washington Printmakers Gallery: Its History

Several arts organizations existed in Washington, D.C. in the 1970s and 1980s that were well-known for their exhibit opportunities, as well as for their energy, vision, and high standards. One of these was the Washington Women's Arts Center, created by and for women artists. Housed in a first-floor brownstone on Q Street NW, with roughly a hundred members, this arts center served not only as a gallery, but also as a meeting place and magnet for both established and aspiring artists of both genders. Within this center, a group of printmakers crystallized and became known as The Printmakers of the Washington Women's Arts Center (clever name!).

The WWAC Printmakers met monthly in the homes of its members to critique

their work, compare techniques, share resources, and entertain guest speakers in the art and print world. I was one of this group and, in fact, chaired the meetings for several years. We were purposely a loosely knit group, eschewing formal structure, dues, by-laws, rules and regulations. We met solely to ingest printmaking knowledge, to find out where workshops were being held, to learn new techniques, and to share exhibit opportunities. In fact, the broad scope of hundreds of exhibit opportunities was what finally led the WWAC Printmakers to envision their own gallery and to ultimately put together the Washington Printmakers Gallery.

Through the 1970s and into the 1980s, the WWAC Printmakers exhibited their work not only through the Washington Women's Arts Center, but through other venues as well, including the Arlington Arts Center, the Washington Project for the Arts, and other cooperative and commercial galleries. When WWAC closed its doors in the mid-1980s, the group became known as the Washington Area Printmakers. They showed in banks, libraries, restaurants, hospitals, churches, and on the city streets. But while they were thus enjoying good exposure and good sales, they were tired of carting framed prints from one place to another. I began to hear the same plaintive song sung again and again, "Why can't we show in our own gallery?" As the song reverberated month after month, I began to survey the singers. If we were to consider opening a gallery, would you be willing to pay in money, time, and effort? Could you make a real commitment for a year or two? Are you a serious enough printmaker to continually maintain a fine body of work, to print consistently, and to adhere to rigid presentation guidelines? Little by little a small group of printmakers began to emerge as the nucleus from which we could spearhead a gallery of our own.

The Quest: Its Process and Methodology

As interest grew, a loosely defined, three-pronged approach developed. A "Location Group" (none of these groups actually had a name at the time they were formed) began to look for a suitable space in down-



Carolyn Pomponio (above); to the right and on the following page are photos of the gallery's inside and street view.

town Washington, D.C. The main gallery district in the 1980s, and continuing today, is the Dupont Circle area in Northwest Washington—a potpourri of art galleries, brownstones, turn-of-the-century mansions, charming shops, outdoor cafes, pricey restaurants, and lots of diverse, interesting people—ideal demographics! The second group, an “Infrastructure Group,” hired an attorney, talked incorporation, began to author by-laws, and make policy. The third group, a “Membership Group,” continued to contact printmakers in an effort to commit thirty artists to the effort. You should be aware that, in the beginning, all three of these un-named groups pretty much consisted of the same three or four members. As time evolved and the concept began to gel, more artists surfaced and became involved. By the time we found our first real gallery space, fifteen artists had signed an agreement, and thirteen others were ready to commit.

The entire process took approximately eighteen months—from the start of the very time-consuming phone survey and commitment process to the signing of an artist/gallery contract, to the signing of a lease. Paralleling that process, the infrastructure began to take hold. We, the member artists, decided we wanted absolute, ultimate control of the gallery and across-the-board exposure of our artwork. This is still today’s policy—a small board of directors which actually runs the gallery, and a policy of the maximum amount of artwork for each artist on the walls, in the bins and in the flat-files. We agreed to set our own sales prices, developed a commission structure, and established monthly dues. We developed presentation guidelines, created parameters for bin and flat-file work, and decided on the hours when the gallery should be open. We created a board of directors to run the gallery, established committees to handle operations, and tapped a fellow member to be the first gallery director. We developed a membership program to recruit new members, put together a “buddy system,” and turned membership meeting minutes into a newsletter. We set up gallery sitting procedures and exhibitions schedules, advertising policy, and marketing strategies. We recruited talent where we needed it—in bookkeeping, law, real estate, design, carpentry, marketing. And during the entire process, we rejoiced



in our accomplishments, took well-deserved credit, and gave each other many pats on the back.

Jefferson Place: Home at Last!

The day we knew it had really happened was the day our real estate agent found a first floor townhouse space on Jefferson Place just south of Dupont Circle—two good-sized rooms and a small kitchen totaling about nine hundred square feet, with a lovely multi-paned window overlooking the tree-lined street, and a do-able rent. This beautiful space sent us into high gear. In a matter of days we had twenty-eight committed, signed-on members, had incorporated, completed our by-laws, signed a one-year lease, bought insurance, hung a sign, and opened our door in May 1985. We had taken our idea and we had run with it. We had turned an undefined, amorphous idea into reality. We marveled at the cumulative talent—the creative energy, the well thought-out ideas, the smartness, the follow-through!

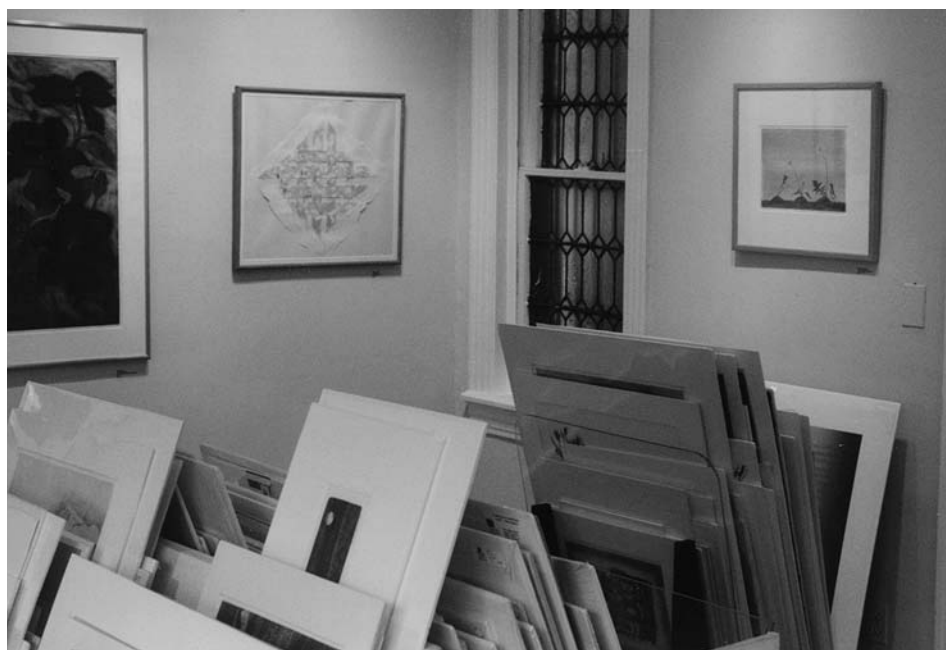
Jefferson Place lasted eighteen months, and, when we lost our lease, we decided to go dark until we could find an even better space. We continued to look in the Dupont Circle area even though several galleries were opening in an underdeveloped neighborhood on Seventh Street. We liked the two-block area of R Street west of Connecticut Avenue where six or seven other galleries were located. So when a “For Rent” sign appeared in the window of an English basement space on R Street, we immediately negotiated a lease, and opened our new door in May 1987.

R Street: Intimate, Charming, and Damp

It was a small, two-room affair, about eight-hundred square feet, which we euphemistically described as “cozy, intimate, and charming.” It was also damp, with termites and very low ceilings. But it had a front and rear room connected by a narrow hallway, and although small, it actually worked well for hanging prints. We hired our first employee/director to manage the day-to-day operations and proceeded to increase our membership to thirty-five. We became increasingly demanding regarding portfolio review and the jurying-in process. We developed a waiting list of interested artists and began to enjoy the local press’s favorable reviews. We became part of the twenty-five-gallery Dupont Circle Galleries Consortium, advertising together and sharing First Friday Openings open-houses each month which featured new solo and group shows—a festive and very popular affair with wine, music, and good art. We had worked very hard for what we believed in and, although there were a few things at our R Street address that we would have willingly changed, the gallery was going well, our clientele was growing, sales were good, and we were happy.

The Road to Success: A Little Bumpy

But, of course, in art, as in life, there are always a few rocks on the road to success. Aside from a few problems with the physical aspect of our R Street space, we soon became acutely aware that a cooperative, by its very nature, makes managing difficult. If we hadn’t known it before, we



quickly realized that a cooperative governs by committee. If you have ever run a small business or been involved in corporate management, you will immediately recognize the fact that managing a cooperative is not an easy task. To alleviate the problem of too many points-of-view on any given subject, we vested the five-member board of directors with as much power as possible. The heavier issues regarding financial, economic, or fiscal decisions are relegated to the treasurer, a finance committee, and the board. Less volatile issues concerning day-to-day operations, procedures, and aesthetics are turned over to the membership and to established committees. Through monthly board and membership meetings, problems and issues are addressed and expeditiously resolved. Policy is redesigned and revised depending on need, and procedures are streamlined as we go.

To help the management effort, we have developed a communications system through e-mail, phone, and fax that keeps the board and members in touch. A monthly newsletter capsulizes meeting minutes and publishes gallery sitting and exhibition schedules. Members also have direct access to board ombudspersons who serve as liaisons and address concerns.

The Washington Printmakers Gallery: Today

Today the Washington Printmakers Gallery is celebrating yet another new

space. In January 1999 we moved to 1732 Connecticut Avenue NW, around the corner from our R Street space, still in the Dupont Circle neighborhood, still a part of the Dupont Circle Galleries Consortium. We now have over a thousand square feet of space, with an office, storage, and beautiful natural light. We have twelve-foot ceilings, crown moldings, hardwood floors, a fireplace in each of the exhibition rooms, and a lovely Greek restaurant on the first floor which displays our work and caters our receptions. Our thirty-five very accomplished artists print the gamut—from the most traditional to the edge of the envelope, including (but not limited to) etchings, aquatints, drypoints, lithographs, collagraphs, serigraphs, mezzotints, monotypes, monotypes, woodcuts, linocuts, emulsion transfers, and computer-generated work. The artists routinely hold workshops, demonstrations, talks, and poetry readings. Because of these outreach activities, the added exposure from being on a main thoroughfare, and a very skilled gallery director, our client base has increased and our sales are soaring.

Conclusion

In looking back and weighing the pros and cons of putting together a cooperative art gallery, I would offer some advice. Be prepared for a lot of work, both initially and on-going. It takes a great deal of time and effort to pull the prospective members together; a respectable amount of money

up front to deal with initial costs; much leg work meeting with lawyers, municipal offices, realtors, and landlords; and endless conversations with fellow member artists. It takes hard work to balance the fiscal requirements, i.e., how many members will it take to cover overhead, what will the overhead be, and can you depend on sales (and on how many sales) to cover the rest of your expenses? And after all of that, if all goes well, there will be continuing issues that will never go away, and that will always require your attention and time. Rather like a good parent—always parenting—forever and ever. But if it is a labor of love (as with parenting), then all is well. Then you can push off with enthusiasm and energy, re-fuel from time to time with your colleagues, look at the gallery as a work-in-progress and know that, in the end, you will have created the biggest, if not one of the finest works of art you ever thought possible!

[If you would like follow-up information on establishing a cooperative art gallery, feel free to e-mail Carolyn Pomponio at cppomp@aol.com.]

Carolyn Pomponio, a Maryland printmaker working in serigraphy, intaglio, lithography and monotype, was the driving force in the creation in 1985 of the Washington Printmakers Gallery. She prints in her home studio in Rockville, MD and is currently working on a new series of aquatints and monotypes for a solo exhibit in November 2000. Ms. Pomponio's prints are in the collections of major museums, embassies, universities, and private industries worldwide.

The Protocol: A 10 Step Guide to a Successful Cooperative Art Gallery

1. Develop a mission statement. Based on sound aesthetic and economic principles, the Washington Printmakers Gallery has been structured to disseminate information to print collectors and potential print enthusiasts on the beauty and value of the original print, and to properly exhibit and successfully sell its members' original prints.
2. Begin to gather a group of artists who are interested in opening a gallery, recruit others, and design an artist/gallery contract. We started with an already formed group of printmakers, and contacted them by telephone to narrow down those who were really interested in participating.
3. Decide on a location where you think your gallery could work. Consider gallery "neighborhood," street traffic, Metro access, parking and atmosphere. We considered three different locations that would have worked for our gallery and eliminated those in transitioning neighborhoods and those without the subway or available parking.
4. Contact a real estate agent with potential locations and some idea of what you can afford to pay for rent (i.e., number of artists needed to pay X amount of rent and utilities). We realized that if we could come up with thirty artists who would pay \$50 a month each, we could afford a rent of about \$1,100, leaving us with \$400 to cover utilities (this was in 1985).
5. When you are narrowing location possibilities, contact a lawyer for advice on incorporating. We met with a lawyer who originally directed our efforts toward becoming an out-reach, non-profit corporation, focusing on disseminating information on the original print, rather than a commercial gallery. The IRS viewed us as a commercial entity, and so we incorporated as a commercial gallery.
6. Develop your by-laws, including the basic structure of your gallery as you see it now. Meet often with your group to discuss and finalize potential policy, rules, and regulations. In the fourteen years we have been in business, we have amended our by-laws only once. They have been a valuable piece of our infrastructure and are the basis for policy and operations.
7. Build a structure for your members, i.e., put together an organizational chart, including: Who will govern? Who will operate? What are the tasks necessary to run the gallery? Who will do those tasks? We established a board of directors to make policy, developed a role for a gallery director to run the day-to-day operations, and designed committees to oversee and accomplish specific tasks.
8. When you are about to sign a lease (oh, happy day!), contact an insurance agency for liability insurance, and make sure your artist/gallery letter of agreement is intact. We obtained liability insurance and found that insuring artwork is more expensive than our gallery can afford. Hence, each artist insures his/her own work.
9. Select a person to run your daily operations—either a volunteer (maybe one of your artists) or hire a part-time employee. Put together a contract or letter of agreement for that person. We started out with a volunteer working on commissions on sales, and then we hired a part-time employee who receives a base salary, plus 15% commission on sales.
9. Obtain worker's compensation insurance in addition to your liability insurance if you hire an employee. We added worker's comp insurance when we hired our first gallery director.
10. Select your first board of directors: president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, member-at-large, and establish term limits. We started out with five members on the board of directors, and have since increased the board to seven members. The term is two years.

The Methodology: Eleven Good Things to Do

1. Establish the amount of members' required monthly dues. We started out with \$50 a month, but have increased the dues from time to time.
2. Establish an initial, non-refundable fee. We began with \$50 and have increased this amount through time.
3. Develop several membership categories. We have developed four membership categories:
 - Full membership (\$85 - gallery sitting responsibility and committee work)
 - Partial membership (\$125 - gallery sitting, but no committee work)
 - Special membership (\$150 - no gallery sitting, no committee work)
 - Associate membership (\$45 - limited participation—limited to four members)
4. Establish commission structure. Our artists set their own sales prices. When a work is sold, the commissions are as follows:
65% to the artist
20% to the gallery
15% to the Director.
5. Develop strict presentation guidelines. Our guidelines include clean and archival materials, neutral mats, and unblemished frames.
6. Develop bins and flat-files guidelines. We currently allow twelve pieces of shrink-wrapped artwork from each artist in the bins, and seventeen pieces of artwork from each artist in the flat-files.
7. Put together a gallery sitting schedule for the days when your director will not be working. WPG is open Tuesday through Sunday. Our Director is on duty Wednesday through Saturday (until 9:00 pm on Fridays). An artist/member sits on Tuesdays and on Sundays.
8. Develop committees to organize and compartmentalize gallery tasks and assign each member to at least one committee. Appoint a committee chair, or have the group choose one. Currently, our committees are as follows:

Nominating	Finance
Exhibitions	Hanging/Presentation
Publicity/Traveling Exhibitions	Membership
Communications/ Newsletter	Education/Outreach (Workshops)
Marketing.	
9. Develop a members' newsletter from your monthly membership meeting minutes. We have not only designed a newsletter, but we have used it as an informational tool to special "Friends of the Gallery" patrons.
10. Establish a telephone tree for transferring gallery information to members quickly. We not only use a telephone tree, but use e-mail with over half of our membership. E-mail, telephone, fax and mail are used to get information to the members.
11. Consider a paid bookkeeper to keep your records in good shape and to do your taxes. Because you are now a small business, it is imperative that you keep accurate records. Our bookkeepers have been members, volunteer friends, paid bookkeepers and combinations of all three. Today we are completely computerized and are paying a bookkeeper to keep our books.

The Artist and the Internet: Marketing 101

By Roxane Gilbert

Every successfully self-employed person knows that it is not enough to be the best at what you do. You must also get the word out that you are the right one for the job. Had Pablo Picasso been an introvert, hidden away in an attic in Spain, we might never have even known that he was a prolific, iconoclastic artist. One of the most outstanding paintings of the twentieth century, *Guernica*, might go unseen, covered with a dusty drop cloth in his daughter's basement.

We are fortunate, however, because today, even sitting alone in our lofts, we can still reach an international audience. The network of computers and file servers called the Internet can be our means of getting our names known and our work seen in a global market.

There are many ways for an artist to have a presence on the World Wide Web. If your work is in a major collection, it might already be accessible to web surfers through that collection's web site and database. For example, if you have a print in the collection of the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, it might have been scanned into the file server database of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco¹. Their web site features a database searchable by keyword, artist's name, country and/or time period.

But waiting around for someone else to take the initiative to put your images and information about you on the web is not an effective marketing technique. As much as the World Wide Web is utilized by the venture capitalists and giant corporate entities, it is also an information network that belongs to the guy who owns little else besides his own bootstraps.

For about \$20 a month (less than most people spend to sit on their posteriors watching cable television), you can purchase Internet access that includes your very own email account. Your email account gives you almost instantaneous communication capability, plus access to newsgroups. With your web browser, you literally have at your fingertips powerful search engines, armchair shopping convenience, and more imagery and information than you can process in a lifetime.

Most Internet service providers (ISP's), including content providers such as America Online, also allocate from two to twenty-five megabytes of server space to each member. What this means is that you can store on their hardware the text and image files that make up web pages. Even with just two megabytes of storage space, you can create several pages, which can be linked together. This enables you to display your artwork, discuss your creative philosophy, debate the critics, show off your favorite cat and prize tomatoes, and tell the story of your life.

You do not need to know Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) or computer programming to create your own web pages. There are simple WYSIWIG (What-You-See-Is-What-You-Get) web creation programs available for PC and Macintosh computers. One such program, Netscape Composer, is available free. You can download it at the Netscape Netcenter² as part of the Netscape Communicator software. Netscape Communicator also includes the Navigator browser and Messenger email software.

Of course, once you have your web page on the server, you cannot just go back to work in your studio and expect the world to find you. Your page is one of millions. The next trick is getting people to know it is there. Step number one in this task is to be

sure to include your web address (Uniform Resource Locator or URL) on all of your show announcements, business cards, letterhead, brochures, documentation, etc. Let your gallery know that prospective buyers can view your artwork on the web. If someone in another part of the country (or another part of the world) wants to see your work, give them your URL. It's a lot faster and easier than sending slides. And on short notice you can easily upload new images for a prospect to see.

Another way to help people find you on the web is for you to explore and discover web sites related to yours. Email the webmaster or owner of the page, and offer to add a hyperlink to their site from your page in exchange for a reciprocal link. (A hyperlink is highlighted text that is encoded with the URL of another web page. You can click your mouse on the hyperlinked text, and your browser will automatically open the page to which you are hyperlinked. Although this feat of technology is accomplished with HTML, your WYSIWIG software will write the appropriate code for you.) The more pages that link to you, the more likely it is your page will be indexed on the major search engines.

If you are not inclined to create your own web page, or if you do not even have a computer, you need not be left behind. There are web sites that offer pages to artists for a small design and hosting fee. The California Society of Printmakers and Los Angeles Printmaking Society both have home pages and members pages at Art2u (which I founded and run).³ A big advantage to this arrangement is that you don't have to mess around with computers and design technique. A second advantage is that a site that attracts a lot of visitors is more likely to draw exposure to your individual page.

If the host site has hundreds of artists, your page might get lost in the mix. But even if you have a page on that site, you still should do independent promotion of your page.

A clear benefit to having your own web site is that you control the content. You can add to it and change it whenever the spirit moves you, or there is a compelling reason to do so. The tradeoff, of course, is that computers have been known to be black holes that consume all your time, energy, and money. So at the end of the day, it might be better for you to do what you are best at, and let the experts host your web page.

Keep in mind that although the Internet is relatively young, it is rapidly becoming an indispensable medium for marketing and commerce. Perhaps the partnership between Amazon.com and Sotheby's will encourage collectors to have the confidence to make fine arts purchases online. But in the meantime, do not overlook the Internet as a resource in your marketing toolkit. Today an individual home page is like an electronic business card. Besides serving as a forum to display your art, it communicates that you are serious and accessible. More than that, a well-designed web site is a means for you to tell your story to potential collectors.

See you on the web!

1 Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
(www.thinker.org/imagebase/index-2.html)

2 Netscape Netcenter
(<http://home.netscape.com/computing/download/index.html>)

3 Art2u (<http://www.art2u.com>)

REVIEWS

On the Edge of the Century

By Louis Girling

The California Society of Printmakers presented "On the Edge of the Century: Printmaking and Social Commentary in the 1990s," an exhibition of prints in many media, juried by Rene Yanez and hosted by the Berkeley Art Center. What a revelation! The breadth of technical brilliance and depth of poetic eloquence represented by this exhibition convince me that printmaking as a vehicle for vital social commentary and—dare we dream—radically positive social development lives and thrives at our own *fin de siècle* in Northern California.

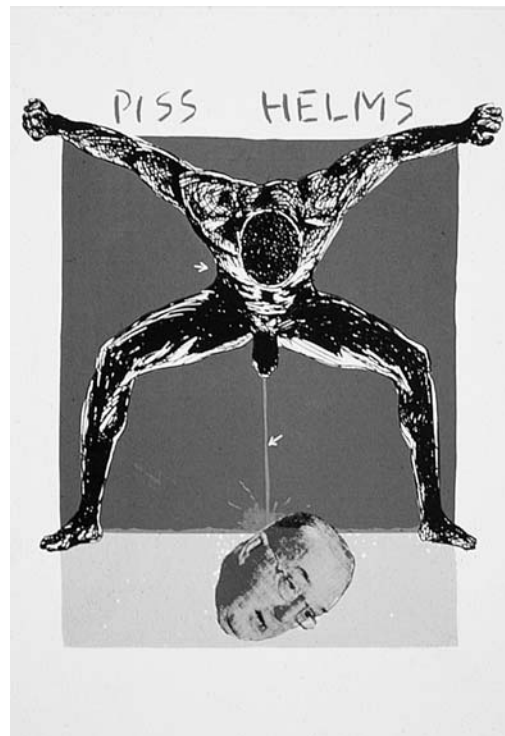
My thanks to Jos Sances for the show's centerpiece, *Piss Helms*. A large and powerful screenprint, *Piss Helms* is one of my favorite works in the exhibition, not only because it prominently features a finely drawn and virile male nude, but also because it puts the senator, metaphorically, exactly where he belongs in artistic circles—on the receiving end of a stream of urine, which pummels his ear and forms a sea into which his surprised and floating head seems just about to sink. I run the risk of stating the obvious to praise Sances' powerful and eloquent protest against censorship and the abuse of political power in a society that purports to hold sacred freedom of speech and the free flow of ideas. Can the era of McCarthy have become so distant a memory?

My personal contempt for Mr. Helms' social policies, particularly as they relate to his success in restricting NEA funding, dates back a decade to the Mapplethorpe scandal at the Corcoran. Were it not for the uproar created by the ultraconservatives on Capitol Hill, very likely I'd have spent my youth ignorant of the work of this master photographer. As it happened, largely because of the uproar, I joined the throng at the University Art Museum to drink in the sculptural beauty of such works as *Ken and Tyler*, 1985, and yes, to be shocked and feel my stomach turn on viewing works such as *Jim and Tom*, *Sausalito*, 1977, a depiction of back-alley water sports to which Mr. Sances makes an oblique reference in his serigraph *Piss Helms*. Many readers will also recognize Sances' direct reference to Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ*—another work which skyrocketed from the halls of obscurity into the national press, thanks to Mr. Helms' vigilance.

I love the way those at the extreme right always manage to focus national attention on the things they feel no one should see.

In spite of current funding problems, CSP artists continue to produce works of great technical virtuosity. Nowhere is this truth more apparent than in the work of Linda Lee Boyd and James Groleau.

Following the path of the social realists, Linda Lee Boyd, in her richly crafted pictures of working class men (*Two Longshoremen* and *Pouring Concrete I*), speaks sonnets on the nobility of work. Boyd's unsurpassed technical brilliance convinces the viewer that she practices the ethic her images ennoble. The textural richness of these works makes it difficult to believe they are crafted from that oldest of printmaking media, the woodcut. I hope the high-tech nouveau-riche yuppies, and their political bedmates who are rapidly shouldering such workers out of our Bay Area communities, are paying attention.



Jos Sances, Piss Helms, silkscreen, 40" x 26"

In his usual subtly incisive manner, James Groleau has fashioned another masterful and haunting image in the medium so technically demanding that even that great modern master of printmaking, Leonard Baskin, has not attempted it—the mezzotint. A portrait of a youth titled *Conscientia Compassionata*, this image offers a first fragrant experience of Groleau's "Flowers of Turbulence" portfolio (now approaching full bloom at his Hunter's Point studio). The figure exudes the sort of quiet confidence that comes from enduring persecution, overcoming prejudice. The symbolism here is not entirely mysterious—a young man robed in colors tastefully suggesting the beauty of a rainbow at least in some circles might be interpreted as homosexual. But his apparent symbiosis with that most transient of creatures, the hummingbird, yields a splendid enigma. Is the hummingbird gathering nectar at the boy's ear, as in the throat of the hibiscus, and if so, what magic has given the boy the skill both to engage and to nourish this creature, timid and elusive as a fairy? Are the two sharing secrets, and if so, whose wisdom is shared with whom?

Creative technical innovation is not lacking here either. For readers who, like myself, have remained quietly skeptical about the artistic merits of Laura La Forêt Lengyel's "body pressings," allow me to encourage you to take a second look. Her *Breast Project* #35 possesses such coloristic richness and sculptural depth I am tempted to say "Move over, Jim Dine." Executed in rich shades of purple, turquoise, orange and green against a background of inky black paper, this stunning work is part of a series of monotypes executed by applying inks to the body of a model, which then serves as the "plate" against which the paper is pressed to produce unique impressions. (Hmmm...I wonder exactly what kind of press she uses...do you suppose this might



Angela Banhara, *The New Biquini*, lithograph, 11" x 15"

warrant a studio visit to view works in progress?)

Comparisons with photography naturally suggest themselves, and I cannot help wondering if Lengyel has read *Veronica's Shrouds* by Michel Tournier. In this modern French story (published in 1978), a neurotic and ambitious (female) photographer, hunting for the perfect model, ensnares a Mediterranean youth of naïve and captivating but imperfect beauty. Subjecting him to the rigors of a lean diet and forced exercise, she transforms him into her vision of photogenic male beauty, stealing his naiveté and innocence in the process. She then proceeds to create her works of art by wrapping him in photosensitive papers, simultaneously inducing a ghastly dermatitis in the model while creating a body of art works, macabre but of exquisite beauty, displayed like the hides of exotic animals captured by an unscrupulous hunter.

Though the technical similarities between Lengyel's work and that of the fictional photographer are astounding, thankfully the moral gulf between the two is equally impressive. Lengyel's "Breast Project" series of body pressings attempts to counteract the powerful cult of perfect physical beauty by creating compelling and, yes, beautiful, images from real and living persons, not idealized conceptions, who may actually participate, with movement or gesture, in the creation of the final image. I understand she has developed inks, especially for use in her body pressings, which are particularly kind to human skin. Her ideas seem simple enough to be truly revolutionary.

Women's issues figure prominently in a number of other featured works. Glen Rogers Perrotto's two works, *Inner Circle* and *Moving Towards Light*, radiate as sort of mystical meditations on the energy and beauty of the female form. Executed in photogravure and monotype, these lovely prints foreshadow her more recent and more fully developed works (monotypes over drypoint), which employ archetypal feminine symbols within a technically rich milieu to create powerfully meditative abstractions.

Tellingly executed on a tall, narrow etching plate (eleven inches wide and seventy-seven inches tall), Nora Pauwels' *Perfect Figure* communicates simultaneously with wit and a heavy hand. Her generous plate seems to offer up a smorgasbord of potential female body types, sketchily etched in black outline and colored in a fleshy tone of pink aquatint. While playful in manner and not

exactly narrative in design, the work subtly conveys its sinister message. On close inspection some of the more generous figures seem to be frantically exercising, perhaps to achieve the lofty status of a lone anorectic contortionist, sporting six point breasts. Though diminutive in size, she has merited a rarefied placement in the distant upper right-hand corner of the sheet, and she seems to be surrounded by squat figures worshipping as if at some primitive totemic shrine.

This passionate expression of female angst over the continuing (and in some ways intensifying) societal pressure to conform to a perverted "Bay Watch" ideal of physical perfection is turned completely on its head in Angela Banhara's beautifully executed lithographs, *The New Biquini* and *American Abundance*. These images present the opposite of the "Bay Watch" ideal, smiling and apparently satisfied women of, shall we say, more than ample proportions. Though these women appear untroubled by the pressures tormenting Pauwels' figures, their abundant bodies, with distorted surfaces of cellulite which remind me of the grotesque flesh in the paintings of Ivan Albright, more than hint at the distressing American problem of over-consumption. The obesity of the figures seems to constitute an inadequate counterbalance for a spiritual void lurking beneath the surface of these images.

The perceptive reader will acknowledge that I have already moved beyond technical brilliance to the eloquence of the poet. Perhaps I should apologize for this flaw in my design, but where can one really draw a line between these two characteristics, which must always intertwine inextricably in the best of the arts?

If Linda Lee Boyd cuts sonnets in wood, Daniel Robeski assembles soliloquies out of paper. Robeski's *Postcards from Hell* succeeds, like the best of Pop Art, in employing the most disposable iconography in the service of the profound. In this highly personal piece, a sense of spiritual longing and deep anxiety, strains of disillusionment with Catholicism, and the appropriation of all-American imagery suggest relationships to Andy Warhol on many levels. However, Robeski is dealing here with a source of anxiety Warhol did not live to address fully, the profound crises of hope, faith, health and social identity provoked by the very real specter of HIV infection and AIDS. (See the photograph of *Postcards from Hell* on page 20.)

Robeski's work appears to be organized around themes of blood, disempowerment, and constant threat of death. In the upper left corner an old German engraving with an elaborate border cut to resemble lace poignantly features Christ crucified, the blood from His hands flowing down toward two figures at the foot of the cross—a woman, probably Mary Magdalene, and an angel—below whom reads the inscription "Durch dein heilig Blut erlöe uns, O Herr!" ("Through your holy blood deliver us, O Lord!"). From here blood circulates throughout the work—as a prominent blood-red, erratic EKG tracing rendered in oil, vigorously applied across the piece's middle; implied by the margins of underlying paper upon which the images are laid, colored the hue of dried blood; and suggested by views of a bright red metallic surface dappled with droplets of water, perhaps cut from a magazine ad for a sports car and applied by collage. But blood has a dual meaning here, carrying the hope of spiritual communion with God via Christ's supreme sacrifice, and the simultaneous threat of hideous death from a blood-borne pathogen, namely HIV. The threat of HIV and AIDS is hurled throughout the piece

by a macabre skeletal figure wielding in one hand an hourglass fast running out and tossing the cards of chance with the other. Etched in black at lower left but recurring in more ghostly form, printed in white ink at intervals over the surface of the large sheet, this dance-of-death specter appears all the more threatening as he has not yet selected a partner. Upper right we find a photograph of a young Robeski, a celebratory image in which he wears a party hat (or is it a dunce cap?), and lower right we find Superman himself doubting his power to avert the impending catastrophe (as he attempts to divert a giant meteor, hurtling toward the planet, he gasps, "Either that, or it'll total me—and Earth can start looking for a new champion of truth, justice, and the American way!"). At the center of this system of images we find a picture of the pope, as popularly depicted for tourists and the Catholic masses everywhere, prominently featured with the word "QUACK" over his head—perhaps an expression of anger and disillusionment over narrow dogmatic prescriptions to address sexual issues in a diverse world, not least of which includes papal attitudes toward the condom.

Robeski's powerful poetry may be enough to remind us of the plague we face, but I am a bit surprised at the paucity of other AIDS-related images in the current exhibition. Nevertheless a work by Xavier Viramontes deserves mention.

Viramontes' *Tribute to Michael*, a four-plate color etching, reads like a glimmering eulogy, which, like the Mexican Day of the Dead, celebrates life in the midst of death, acknowledges death in the midst of life. Items emblematic of Mexican culture—a plate of tacos, rice and beans; a string of dried red peppers; a skull festively decorated—are accompanied by the paraphernalia of an optimistic life: cheerful, if kitschy, flamingoes in porcelain or plastic, postcards from exotic places, a pin-up boy fetishistically clad in only a cowboy hat and boots to match. Central to the composition is a picture of the eulogized young man, gazing with a smile from his photo as if to survey the assemblage in his honor.

Beyond labor, women's issues, and AIDS, the scope of social issues addressed by the artists is surprisingly broad, ranging from international crises to violence arising in unexpected quarters to the private abandonment of the vulnerable.

Perhaps the most surprising expression comes from Diane Jacobs, whose ruminations on higher education and the structures of social power go far beyond the naughty wad of chewing gum stuck on the underside of her desk. Combining the ascetic intellectual approach of the conceptual artist with the disciplined craft of the bookmaker, Jacobs has created *Knowledgeable*, a work ripe with wit and anger through which she questions (1) the wisdom of a society which judges the readiness of its professionals on the basis of their performance on "multiple guess" examinations; (2) the maturity of a culture which continues to raise its sons with violent attitudes towards women ("Choose the method most effective at shutting her up..."); and (3) the failure of our families and support systems to balance candid sexuality education with a respect for the profound mystery of this most private and personal of issues. *Knowledgeable* takes the form of a hand-wrought "examination" executed in letterpress, linocut and photoengraving, hand bound and laid onto a small desk complete with a timer. Among its many delights, I was particularly entertained by the instruction to "place the images in the proper order" followed by a series of linocuts offering stages in the proverbial "chicken or the egg" scenario; the

multiplicity of potentially "correct" answers brought back memories of many a frustration at not being encouraged to express shades of gray at many stages of my own education.

Along with *Piss Helms* (I can't seem to get enough of that title), the most powerful and direct social commentaries emanate from two images executed in relief.

In the case of Barbara Milman's *In a free society police do not shoot first and ask questions later* (In memory of Amadou Diallo, shot and killed by New York City police, 1999), the commentary reads more like a furious outcry. Her monumental masterwork gains momentum from every innovative technique she employs. In tall woodcut, black over white paper, stands a human figure, stylized in the form of a practice target on a police academy shooting range, with bull's eyes at the head and the genitals. A second sheet of translucent paper, attached from the top, floats freely before the figure, riddled with blackened bullet holes. The delicate surface of the translucent sheet is weighed heavily down with splatters of blood-red acrylic paint, the dawning significance of which holds the capacity to fill the viewer's own vessels with outrage. Meanwhile, the floating translucence of the sheet, drifting now nearer, now more distant, from the surface of the figure beneath it, threatens to plunge the victim into forgotten obscurity.

Simpler in execution, but equally as powerful hangs Eduardo Fausti's linocut in black and red *In Memory of Matthew Shepard*. I could not stand before this image too long for fear my emotions would get the better of me. The lone figure of this martyred young man, murdered because ignorant thugs felt their masculinity threatened by his difference, hangs Christ-like on a fence. The lovingly rendered lines of the gay man's body transform into a bloody stream at his feet, recalling symbolically the mystical blood of many martyrs rendered in Western art over nearly the past millennium. Excerpts of newspaper articles, applied by chine collé, chronicle the public shock over the event and bring near its reality. The dates of Shepard's brief life "1977-1998" stand as upon a tombstone, cold reminders of a death too soon, and below the figure are the words "HATE KILLS," a firm plea to end the rhetoric of intolerance which breeds violence, even in our children. Fausti convincingly persuades us this "gay agenda" against hate crimes should be society's agenda, reaching from our households to the nation's capital.

Any groundbreaking show must include a few, well, let's call them "challenges." As much as I like Jos Sances' work, and in particular *Piss Helms*, I hope his *They Found Jesus* isn't a sign of the times for Northern California art. I've heard it said that in New York you couldn't really be part of the crowd in art circles if a shocking image offends you. Pardon me, Jos, if I blinked. This particularly distasteful image offends me.

When I was a child, our priest (I'm an Episcopalian) delivered a sermon in which he described Jesus as a "damn man." I remember asking my mother, "Why did the priest curse in church?" She wisely insisted I pose my question directly to him. His intent, I think, was to impress upon the congregation the genuine humanity of Christ. He definitely made an impression—I'm writing about the sermon thirty years later—but I still think his means was crude and tacky, not exactly fitting for the task. Sances has topped my childhood pastor by depicting, quite skillfully, I might add, the Savior caught in an act of cunnilingus spied by a Puritan voyeur. (I'm blinking again.) I don't think the point, here, is to

hold up the humanity of Christ, a task which, incidentally, has been brilliantly accomplished by another CSP artist, William Wolff, in his masterful woodcut *They Gave Him a Fish*, which was recently on view at the Fetterly Gallery in Vallejo. Maybe Sances' point is to insist on his own freedom of expression, and perhaps to suggest that the pleasures of the flesh—or at least some of them—should not be denied the holy. Good points, I agree, but I'd really rather not hang this one on my wall.

Although some of our Dutch colleagues recently exhibiting at Faultlines/Watermarks might disagree, I still view a great work of art as a medium for communication of minds across time and space. The greatness of a work, in my view, lies in its ability to sustain the dialogue it creates with its viewer over time, as new layers of meaning are revealed and alternate interpretations suggest themselves. Or its greatness may lie in its ability to communicate its particular message powerfully to many people at once or to a group of people or a society over time. No doubt Sances' *Piss Helms* and Milman's *In a free society...* possess the power to deliver that latter kind of impact and to alter our society's values concerning the particular issues they address, but is anyone likely to notice? Thank God we can still preach to the converted in Berkeley. Where are the scores of high school students lining up to view the show, which should surely be on the hot list for any educator in the arts and social sciences hoping to ignite the flame of moral fervor in agile and creative minds?

I'd love to see this show, say, as an *entr'acte* to a Diebenkorn retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Where is Senator Helms when you really need him?

Louis Girling was born, raised, and educated in the deep South but has made his home in San Francisco for the past eleven years, where he resides with his domestic partner, Alejandro, and their dog. A pediatrician by profession, he also holds a BFA in music and has a long-standing passion for the arts. He collects the work of William Blake and his circle, the magical realists, and fine hand-wrought prints and drawings by established and emerging artists.

Faultlines/Watermarks: What's in a Name?

By Laura La Forêt Lengyel

My impressions of this exchange enterprise were derived at the opening reception on May 7, 1999, at The Atrium at 600 Townsend (formerly known as The Contract Design Center) in San Francisco. The event was well attended by California Society of Printmakers exhibitors, members, and the general public which frequents the rambling commercial complex in the city's design district.

"Faultlines/Watermarks: California/Amsterdam," (in Dutch "Watermerk/Breuklijn: Amsterdam/California") took place simultaneously in San Francisco and Amsterdam. The organizing group in Amsterdam was the Amsterdams Grafisch Atelier (AGA) and in California, the California Society of Printmakers (CSP). The San Francisco show then went to the Fetterly Gallery in Vallejo, California. In Amsterdam, the exhibit started out at Der Zaaijer and then moved on to the town hall of Heemstede.

In Amsterdam, selections were made by Ernst van Alphen, head of communications and education at the Boijmans-van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam, and author of several books on art and literature; Nono Reinhold, printmaker; and Huguette

Paternostre, gallery director. In California, Karin Breuer, curator of the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts at the San Francisco Fine Arts Museum, selected works for the CSP.

As the first travelling exchange show with the Netherlands for CSP, the idea of this exchange was to show the same work in each location. The selection of sixty-six etchings, lithographs, mixed media prints, and woodcuts reflected a wide range of hand printing techniques and approaches in abstraction and figuration with excellent examples of works on paper from both countries. The artists are masters of their crafts.

For the printmaker and the general viewer, the benefit of such an exchange was seeing prints from another country. The general viewer, however, would not be able to distinguish between the works of the two countries without reading the labels. The differences can become apparent after a careful viewing of the work. CSP work tended to be more figurative, more colorful, and more traditional in method than the AGA work. There was no attempt to interpret the title or theme of the show on the part of CSP members, and their editions were larger. Some of the Amsterdam artists, on the other hand, appeared to use the theme for conceptualizing new work through forms and colors. Their subject matter was exteriors, interiors, nature, the self, or impressions of nature as conveyed in earth colors and black.

Herein lies an interesting difference in work styles. Most CSP members do not create new work for shows to match a title. Even though the exhibit featured only members' works that are limited edition prints, the specific guidelines were different for each group. The AGA, whose admission policy (like the CSP's) is through a strict jury process, determined their own submission guidelines. To be eligible for the Dutch selection process, an edition constituted a minimum of three, which meant that new work was encouraged. Some of the selections were indeed very small editions of three—just enough prints were produced to satisfy the three venues. There were a few prints released as small edition variable (E.V.) because of the difficulty in exact duplication of impressions whose matrix or plates are complex in printing and duplication.

The question for me is: how much do the prints vary from location to location, and does it matter? Some of the Dutch artists created work for the exhibit interpreting the title as a theme, which CSP members did not feel was necessary. Without actually having a conference, how would the Dutch artists know that the exhibit title was a description of the exchange locations, Faultlines (California's characteristic earthquakes, and Watermarks, Holland's lowlands and coastline)? The title Faultlines/Watermarks indicates both the geographic setting of the two groups and the process of printing itself. Some of the Dutch artists tried to literally or conceptually interpret the title. The double-themed title led one to expect rich metaphoric extensions. As a fresh, first-time viewer, the subject matter had nothing to do with the exhibit title, which was actually ambiguous and misleading. In recent years, the theme idea and amorphous non-descriptive titling of many exhibits has become objectionable. Esoteric titling makes exhibits inaccessible, unappealing, and almost elitist for the general viewer. The practice restricts the audience to a small academic or artistic group. Since it is already difficult to draw audiences to strictly printmaking exhibits, remote titling can further deter viewers.

A few pieces were notable. Soft subtle colors of Elma Oosthoff's lithograph were outstanding. The only example in the San

Francisco exhibit that exemplified an artist's custom framing as an integral part of the work was Nate Friedenberg's ingenious use of related materials. He used packing crate materials, strapped together with packing straps to frame his mixed media print of a faux crate, a varied edition of seven collagraphs. Linda Lee Boyd's *Pouring Concrete* was rich with varied textures of figurative woodcuts. Outstanding examples of the contemporary prints were Ursula Neubauer's two large format mixed media works. The subtly colored reclining nudes showed a high level of technical sophistication that engaged long contemplation.

We must give credit to both groups for just the organizational and logistical tasks of such exhibits. It was truly a feat of altruism, considering the limited size of CSP's volunteer work group and miniscule operating budget supported entirely by the membership.

Laura La Forêt Lengyel, originally from Connecticut, graduated in studio art from Mills College in 1967. She owned a gallery in Mendocino for five years, representing many printmakers. Her studio is now in San Francisco's SOMA district where she has been involved with innovative forms of printmaking and mixed media sculpture since 1995.

Reflections on Small Works at the Claudia Chapline Gallery

By Joanna Present

The Claudia Chapline Gallery presented "Small Works from the California Society of Printmakers: 1999 Annual Exhibition," in Stinson Beach, CA, from June to September 1999.

What is a print? An echo of something hands have touched. A work on paper. A reproduction by machine. An individual work of art. A statement in one frame. An illustration of a dream. A foot in sand. A record of time. A human mark.

In this work, drawing, painting, and relief sculpture come together. Line, color, and texture coexist as distinct elements with equal strength. A female nude, deep tones of gold and copper, lines and lines of words in script—all are pressed equally into one plane. Layers, identities, dimensions of perception, all pressed equally into one tiny square.

A target. The printing press was created to reproduce graphic images like this

one. Yet this target is eroded, scraped, and scratched like a rock face. This target is a million years old. Architectural diagrams and a perfect image of a plum tree; the yellowed background of parchment. The lines of spiraling galaxies and electrons are carved in stone, just like the cave paintings down the wall. Why do we find renderings of time so pleasing?

A screaming blonde is rescued from a burning building by eager firemen. A cartoon woman relaxes happily in a bathtub. A cat yawns. A row of punks and an old guy stand in line for the late movie. Caravaggio's Bacchus hangs with a stegosaurus and a pink flamingo. A kitchen table is covered with pies in the morning. A childlike stick figure called "Muscle Girl" stands triumphant atop a pile of bones.

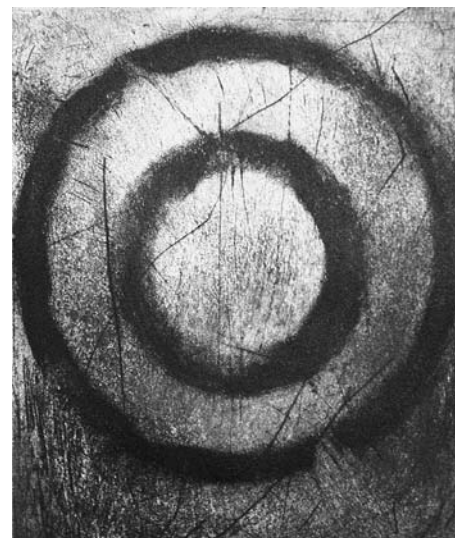
Ink is smushed in bright colors, sensuous like paint. Flowers, birds, fruit, bright here and then their echoes, fainter and fainter, all around the image. Are the seasons changing? Bright smushy lions and elephants march in rows across the page. Thank goodness for their weight, their bodies like footprints mushing into delicious mud.

And then there are teabags, damp giants in a world with a wood grain.

Here, in this gallery, we find a place where past, present, and future come together in exploration and celebration. We find images which speak to us about the process of time, which integrate and disintegrate. We find icons and nuances, moments of humor and moments of contemplation. These prints are reflections of how life imprints itself on our minds and hearts. These prints are handprints, the marks of who and what and where we are.

There are prints with a short creative life—the monoprint image which can be pressed into paper one time; the drypoint image can deliver its rich lines, lines which truly look like they are carved in stone, a few times; then there are etchings which can be reproduced almost endlessly, defying the "moment" where an individual painting or drawing exists. Yet each print, each reflection, has its own life. Perhaps this is the mystery which draws contemporary artists to printmaking.

The print is a ghost, a shadow of a thing which has been scratched and carved, rubbed and scraped, brushed and eroded. The block of wood, metal plate,



Glen Rogers Perrotto, *Target*, monoprint/drypoint, 1998, 7" x 5"

or stone which has been cut or etched is only present in a reflection, a reflection which has been created, perhaps identically hundreds of times, by industrial means. The print is the place where the mark of the hand and the mark of the machine find harmony.

This room is diversity. Printmaking has its traditions—medieval illustration, the documentation of life in Japan—legions of anonymous artists have made prints. Now prints are regarded as viable works of art, and printmakers as true artists. What freedom we find here! No heavy weight of tradition, no feeling that there's nothing new to be done. Here there is room for comedy, there is room for fancy, there is room for narrative, there is equal room for the primitive line and the precision of the draftsman.

To enter this gallery is to enter a room full of jewels, a room full of small brilliant moments. This room is full of prints, treasures in boxes, traces of permanence on paper. The images are present as part of the paper, pressed into the paper, like tattoos. Sometimes the impressions even enough, without ink, an image shaping the paper like wind shapes trees.

Joanna Present is a recent graduate in art history and fine arts from Columbia University. She studied printmaking at Il Bisonte, an international printmaking school in Florence, Italy. She lives in Stinson Beach where she regularly writes reviews of shows at the Chapline Gallery. She also writes and illustrates children's books and is currently working on a screenplay which takes place in the art world.

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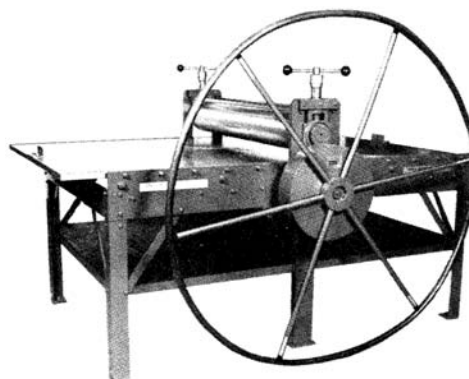
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