

PRINT MAKING/NEW FORMS

In the last twenty years there has been a revolution in American printmaking. Since their invention, woodcuts, etchings, lithographs and serigraphs have been used primarily as illustrations in books and periodicals, painting and sculpture reproductions, and political or commercial posters. Their potential as art objects was largely overshadowed by their utilitarian role. The disciplines of printmaking, as distinct from other art forms, developed standards of excellence that reflected their primary illustrative, rather than creative, function. Strict adherence to the traditional rules of production techniques was a fundamental basis of the education of printmakers. To many painters and sculptors of the late 1950s printmaking seemed limited, but once these artists committed themselves to it they found a fertile ground for innovation. Through their explorations, printmaking has been freed of its traditional boundaries and has become a major experimental form in contemporary art.

When, in 1957, Tatyana Grosman tried to involve artists in printmaking, she found them resistant. Robert Rauschenberg later recalled that he felt, "The second half of the twentieth century was no time to start writing on rocks." Larry Rivers was the first artist to work with Grosman, and when others followed she set up Universal Limited Art Editions, the first of the major print workshops for artists established in this country. Other presses were founded soon after: Tamarind was started by June Wayne in 1959, and Gemini Editions Limited by Ken Tyler in 1965.

Many of the artists whose interest in prints was stimulated initially by the large workshops retained an ambivalent attitude toward them. They found prints restricted by the preordained technological limits, and they were hesitant to leave the familiar environment of their studios to work with a professional printer in a workshop setting. In spite of these misgivings, the potential of the process finally outweighed the drawbacks. Jasper Johns, who made his first print in 1960, has said, "What interests me most in printmaking is technical innovation." This remark reflects a more general feeling that the traditional definitions of printmaking are to be challenged.

Some of the innovations in printmaking during the last twenty years have been quite simple, but the application of the new ideas and creative energy of contemporary artists has altered the nature of the medium. Johns' experimental marking of the lithograph stone with his hands and face defies the traditional prohibition against skin contact with the plate. Two prints in this exhibition incorporate the artists' use of their bodies either to ink the plate, as in Marisol's *Dptych*, or to mark the paper directly, as in David Hammons' *Untitled*.

Frequently the problems imposed by the medium have drawn from artists some of their finest work. Jasper Johns used the print *Decoy* as a reiteration of his work from 1960 to 1971. It contains images from several of his own earlier prints, paintings and sculptures, playing upon the traditional use of the print as a reproduction of art before photography took its place. The print was made on a hand-fed offset lithography press designed for commercial use. The "touch" of this press is much lighter than that

JASPER JOHNS Decoy 1971
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions



of the press normally used for fine art prints. This allowed nineteen colors and images to be printed on the same sheet of paper, many more than is ordinarily possible.

Many artists have found a challenge in printmaking that provided a catalyst for the development of their work as a whole. Helen Frankenthaler expressed this in saying of her graphics, "The limitations and the refinement and the strangeness have always helped me. That's true with any unknown medium. You get a whole new take. Something that makes you a little off balance or a little clumsy or a little risky is very good to grow on."

An example of the combination of contemporary artistic values with the problems imposed by the medium is Robert Rauschenberg's *Breakthrough*. This print owes its unique character to the failure of the lithograph stone to withstand the pressure of the printing process. Rauschenberg incorporated the cracking of the stone, traditionally considered disastrous, into the print as a compositional element. Since the crack worsened during the course of the edition each print came out differently—a further departure from traditional printmaking.

Extensions of the print form have gone in different directions. Some of the artists in this exhibition have become interested in the paper itself. Clinton Hill's print is essentially an edition of dyed paper pulp that does not involve the use of printing as such. Frank Stella's *Nowe Miastro* is a relief in which paper was molded into a form designed by the artist, dyed while still wet and later hand tinted. In two prints, Alan Shields has gone beyond the usual idea of a print as a single-sided two-dimensional art form. *Flat Blue Frog* has large open areas that encourage the viewer to relate the two surfaces of the print to one another and to peer through the network of patterned lines in order to see what lies behind. In *Sun, Moon and Title Page*, paper strips are threaded through slashes in the print's surface to both enrich and obscure the original inking. Jody Shields has used collage methods in her two prints to give etched paper a sculptural quality. Louise Kramer has run ink-soaked cloth through a press to produce an image on paper.

The development of the print as an art object owes much to the large workshops' commitment to innovative, high-quality printmaking. While these workshops have brought major figures in the art world to the process of making prints, many artists have mastered the technology for themselves and have been producing prints on their own. It is the purpose of this exhibition to show some of the directions by contemporary artists in printmaking.

MARISOL D'arych 1971
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions



CATALOGUE

Measurements are in inches.
Height precedes width precedes depth.
Size of edition is listed as ed.
followed by the number of the edition.

BENNY ANDREWS b. 1930

Messinger 1975 ed. 25
Xerographic-collage. 24 x 18
Lent by the artist

RACHEL BAS-COHAIN b. 1940

Spool Grid and Distortions from the Rubber and Two Rubber Fragments 1976 ed. 20
Silkscreen. A photograph of the thread spools was photo-silkscreened onto stretched rubber by the artist. The rubber was then released and a photo-silkscreen was made of the image in its new form. This screen was then printed on paper. The rubber pieces are exhibited beside the final print. 30 x 22, fragments measure: 8 x 7½ and 7 x 10
Lent by the artist

LUIS CAMNITZER b. 1937

Second Degree Burn 1975 ed. 50
Print produced by metal stencil and fire, done in a series of first, second and third degree burn stages.
24 x 23
Courtesy of Hundred Acres Gallery

JIM DINE b. 1936

LEE FRIEDLANDER b. 1934
Untitled (From: Photographs and Etchings)
1969 ed. 75
Etching by Jim Dine working in collaboration with Lee Friedlander, whose photograph was attached to the print upon completion of etched image. 18 x 30
Courtesy of Petersburg Press

JOHN DOWELL b. 1941

Score II – Love Waltz for Sax and Violin
1973 ed. 15
Etching and aquatint. The artist created the image of fluid white lines by drawing on the plate with a French lithographic drawing ink. The ink served as a resist when the plate was etched. Then enamel spray paint was applied in place of resin as the primary material for the aquatint, thus creating the intense dark background. 30 x 22
Lent by the artist

MARSHA FEIGIN b. 1946

New York City Subway #2 1973 ed. 50
Sandblast etching. Hard ground was sprayed on a large copper plate through stencils, then the plate was etched. Sandblasting was then applied to further modify tonal areas. 44 x 30
Lent by the artist

HELEN FRANKENTHALER b. 1928

East and Beyond 1973 ed. 18
Woodcut printed from eight blocks on handmade Nepalese paper. 31½ x 21½
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Tony Towle

DAVID HAMMONS b. 1943

Untitled 1974 ed. 5
Body print. The artist oils parts of his body or shaped materials, and presses them onto clean paper. He then brings up the image by sifting powder pigment over the oil impression he has made.
29 x 23
Courtesy of Just Above Midtown Gallery

CHARLES HILL b. 1948

Quando Vayas a Cagar 1974 ed. 50
Silkscreen printed on newsprint and machine-stitched with various threads. Each print was buried three to five days in earth, then washed and repaired by stitching. 24 x 29½
Courtesy of Ellen Sragow, Ltd./Prints on Prince Street

CLINTON HILL b. 1922

Four Finger Exercise 1975 ed. 10
Color was added to the paper pulp in the original formation of the paper sheets in order to create an image. 22¾ x 18¼
Courtesy of Ellen Sragow, Ltd./Prints on Prince Street

JASPER JOHNS b. 1930

Decoy I 1971 ed. 55
This print was produced by one lithograph stone run on hand press. In addition, 18 plates were used and then printed on hand-fed offset proofing press.
41 x 29
Collection of Bill Goldston

ROSEMARIE KEEVIL b. 1947

Bow and Arrow 1975 ed. 3
Etching, cut and mounted on wood sticks.
28 x 8 x 4
Lent by the artist

LOUISE KRAMER b. 1923

Untitled 1976 ed. 1

This print was produced from inked marquisette silk laid on paper and run at high pressure through a press. 30 x 22

Lent by the artist

TADEUSZ LAPINSKI b. 1928

Continuity 1975 ed. 5

Lithograph. Brush grained aluminum plate coated with photo-sensitive emulsion, then coated with transparent gel which hardens to resemble the original plate surface. The artist then works directly on this emulsion to complete the image. 30 x 22

Lent by the artist

MARISOL b. 1930

Diptych 1971 ed. 33

Lithograph. Print made by artist pressing her tusche-covered body onto the stone. Tusche is a liquid substance with high grease content which is commonly used by lithographers.

Two panels: 48 x 32, 48 x 32

Collection of John Loring

LOUISE NEVELSON b. 1899

Sky Garden 1971 ed. 150

Lead relief. A thin lead sheet was pressed over wood mold. 30 x 25

Courtesy of Pace Editions, Inc.

CLAES OLDENBURG b. 1929

Profile Airflow 1969 ed. 75

Molded polyurethane relief over color lithograph. 33½ x 65½

Lent by The Museum of Modern Art, New York

LILIANA PORTER b. 1941

Untitled 1975 ed. 50.

Photo-etching with additional aquatint collage pieces that are superimposed upon underlying image.

26 x 25

Courtesy of Hundred Acres Gallery

RICHARD PRINCE b. 1949

Untitled 1976 ed. 5

Mixed media of photograph, etching, xerox and typed copy. 24 x 36

Courtesy of Ellen Sragow, Ltd./Prints on Prince Street

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG b. 1925

Breakthrough II 1965 ed. 34

Lithograph. During the printing of this edition the lithograph stone began to break. The resulting crack appears in the print beginning in the lower left-hand corner as a white break in the image. It differs in every print due to the progressive breaking of the stone as the edition was being printed.

48½ x 34

Collection of Stanley and Renie Helfgott

Ringer (Hoarfrost Series) 1974 ed. 31

Offset print image transferred to cheesecloth, satin, China silk and paper bag, and collage. 70 x 36

Courtesy of Castelli Graphics

JAMES ROSENQUIST b. 1933

F-111 1974 ed. 75

Lithograph with silkscreen additions, printed in four panels and 59 colors.

2 panels 36¼ x 75 each, 2 panels 36 x 69 each

Courtesy of Petersburg Press

ALAN SHIELDS b. 1944

Flat Blue Frog 1974 ed. 11

Lithograph with embossing relief on dyed paper.

17¼ x 21½

Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery

Sun Moon Title Page 1971 ed. 100

Dyed paper, silkscreen and thread. 26 x 26

Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery

JODY SHIELDS b. 1952

Big B 1975 ed. 1

Etching on brown paper bag. 24¼ x 18

Courtesy of Ellen Sragow, Ltd./Prints on Prince Street

Double Ruffles and Red Dots 1974 ed. 7

Mixed media and etching on paper bag. 21 x 13

Courtesy of Ellen Sragow, Ltd./Prints on Prince Street

FRANK STELLA b. 1936

Nowe Miastro 1975 ed. IV-2

Paper relief process. Cotton pulp with colored paper collage and dyes, applied during wet formation of the paper. Hand coloring applied after paper is dried. 25½ x 21½ x 1¼

Courtesy of M. Knoedler and Co.

BASIC PRINTMAKING PROCESSES

WOODCUT

Woodcut prints on cloth have been made since biblical times. This relief printing process was applied to paper in the late fourteenth century. A design is incised into a flat block of wood of even grain. The artist may use a variety of implements, some to cut fine lines, others to gouge out larger areas of wood, as the design requires. The cut block is inked evenly with a roller and pressed face down on paper or other surface on which the print is to appear. The incised areas of the wood block, since they do not receive ink from the roller, will appear as uncolored areas in the finished print.

ETCHING

Etching is an intaglio or incising process that probably originated in the workshops of medieval armorers. Today a smooth copper, zinc or iron plate is used. The artist spreads a layer of waxy, acid-resistant ground over the metal plate, then scratches a design into it using needles of various sizes. The plate is dipped in an acid bath that eats away at the etched design but does not affect other areas of the plate. A sheet of paper is placed over the inked plate and both are run at high pressure through a press. Fine tones may be added to the etching through the process of aquatint. The metal plate is dusted with a granular, slightly acidic material that further erodes the plate. Where the acid bites more deeply, more ink will settle, and those areas will appear darker in the print.

LITHOGRAPHY

The basic lithographic process was invented in Germany in the late eighteenth century. Greasy lithographic crayons are used to make an image on a flat limestone slab, which is then chemically treated so that only the greased design will absorb printer's ink. A roller is used to apply a very thin layer of the sticky ink to the stone which is then run through a press.

SILKSCREEN (SERIGRAPHY):

Silkscreen is a form of stencil printing. Silk gauze is stretched tightly over a frame and varnished wherever ink is not to appear on the finished print. The paper or other material to be printed is placed beneath the screen, and ink is scraped over the screen so that it permeates all areas except the varnished parts. A different screen must be used for each color that is to appear in the finished print. Since no press is used in the silkscreening process, ink lies openly on the surface of the finished print.

DAVID HAMMONS *Untitled* 1974



This exhibition has been organized by the following Helena Rubinstein Fellows in the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program: Susan Buckler, Brandeis University; Madeleine Burnside-Lukan, University of California, Santa Cruz; Anne Hoagland, University of Pennsylvania; Andrew W. Kelly; Judith F. Romer, New York University; and Karen Schoen. Other Helena Rubinstein Fellows in the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program are: Richard Heymans, Middlebury College; Mitchell D. Kahan, The City University of New York Graduate Center; and Mimi Roberts, The George Washington University.

The Downtown Branch Museum is under the direction of David Hupert, Head of the Whitney Museum's Education Department. The Administrative Coordinator is Toba Tucker.

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