

The Print Club of New York Inc

Summer 2020

President's Greeting — Spring/Summer 2020

Dear Print Club of New York Members,

This membership year has concluded in a way I don't think any of us were anticipating just a few months ago when the art fairs were under way and we were looking ahead to other spring events. I hope that you and your families and friends have been safe and healthy during this time, that you have found ways of acclimatizing to the changes, and that you have emotional, financial, and community support while we all wait for confirmation that our regular activities can begin again safely. I will share that I have been struggling, as many people have been, to find balance in the midst of the upheaval. My family has been healthy, for which I am exceedingly grateful, though we're challenged by conducting remote schooling while working from home at the same time. Hours, if not days, have been spent applying for grants and loans, attending Zoom meetings, and starting from scratch with developing new programming for my organization. If anything, we are fortunate to be able to stay connected to each other in ways unthinkable 10 to 20 years ago. We would not be able to communicate as effectively or accomplish as much without the technology that keeps us in touch. So even though we are physically isolated, we have ways of remaining in contact from a distance.

During this time, the Board of the Print Club has been actively shifting around our events and other Club-related activities based on current information with the knowledge that we cannot predict the future, so some plans may

yet undergo additional reshuffling. Obviously, the Annual Meeting could not be held, nor the associated Artists' Showcase that would have happened in May.

We have rescheduled the Annual Artist's Talk for later in the fall. We do know that we have some leeway around choosing dates that won't interfere with the schedule of the fall fairs since they have been cancelled. A concern we have is if the tide turns this fall and our in-person gathering is not possible, we're considering the possibility of an online talk in lieu of the live presentation. We have pushed the Showcase back to the date of our May 2021 Annual Meeting on May 17 and hope that by then nothing will interfere with our ability to come together in person to hear from our wonderful group of talented printmakers. Other events will be added in between as conditions permit.

This year, voting for Board members will be conducted electronically. We are looking into suitable web-based tools to meet our needs and will distribute the online ballot by email. Also of note, membership renewals will be mailed out in the coming weeks with a renewal due date of September 1st. The annual print for this fall is already complete, so we are on track for getting that out to members.

In thinking of the artist and printmaking community, as a result of job losses compounded by cancelled art fairs, exhibitions, and gallery shows, this is the time when our support as collectors of work by print artists is that much more important. Reach out and inquire about making a purchase; they need people to buy their work now more than ever. Many are online — you can find them on social media, such as Instagram or Facebook, some have websites, or you can run a search to find other ways to connect with them. Even while many things are on pause or minimally operating, we should do what we can to help artists make it through this time so we can all come out together at the end of the journey.

All the best,
Kim Henrikson

The Print Club of New York, Inc.

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Recent Print Club Events

Works on Paper Fair

Gillian Greenhill Hannum

Members of the Print Club of New York were able to enjoy their VIP passes to the annual Works on Paper Fair, held at Pier 36 in Lower Manhattan from March 5 – 8, 2020. Part of the larger Armory Week, it was likely the last art fair to be held in the City before lockdown.

While not limited to prints (there are always wonderful drawings, watercolors and other paper-based works available), this fair always has lots to offer for print enthusiasts with booths from many of the major print studios in the U.S. as well as galleries and dealers from around the

world. Among the 100 galleries represented were a number with a focus on various print media, including Aspinwall Editions, Benrison Editions, Center Street Studio, Dolan/Maxwell, Stoney Road Press, Tamarind Institute, Tandem Press, and the Tolman Collection. Print Club of New York Board member Allison Tolman said of

the fair, "All exhibitors showed up, the booths were lovely and full of enticing works on paper, as usual. Attendance was lower than usual except for the final day, Sunday, which was very busy." All of this was very positive given the looming pandemic. Most art fairs are now on hold until 2021.

Remembering Muriel Moss (1932-2020)



Muriel Moss manning the table at the Print Club's 2009 exhibition at the National Arts Club.
PHOTO BY GILLIAN HANNUM

Kay Deaux

For all of us who knew her, Muriel Moss is someone we will never forget. Generous, energetic, and extraordinarily loyal to people and organizations that she believed in, Muriel was a person whose presence and whose friendship made a difference in lives and events. The Print Club of New York was one of the organizations that benefitted greatly from Muriel's enterprise and commitment. For more than 20 years, Muriel was a key figure in the development and the activities of the Club.

Muriel's interest in and knowledge of prints was set in motion when she married Leonard Moss in 1989. Surrounded by Len's extensive print collection, Muriel wanted to learn more about the world of prints and further develop her ability to share experiences in galleries and museums with Len. Characteristically, Muriel sought out the experts to inform her—in this case, by enrolling in a course at the New School for Social Research, cotaught by David Kiehl, long-time curator of prints at the Whitney Museum, and Reba White Williams, renowned collector with her husband Dave Williams, of American prints.

A classmate in the course told Muriel about the Print Club, which was then in its infancy, and put her in touch with Morley Melden (the first president of the Club). Morley invited Muriel and Len to attend a Print Club event at Tyler Graphics, after which the Mosses immediately applied to join the Club in 1994. Not long after, as Morley Melden became aware of Muriel's extensive experience and proven skills in working with organizations, he asked her to chair the Events Committee, a position which Muriel so successfully carried out for 13 consecutive years.

Within a few years of joining the Club, both Muriel and Len became members of the Board, a role Muriel continued to fill until 2015. She took on the additional role of Recording Secretary when Leonard Moss became President of the Club in 2006, following the husband-wife model established by the prior president Julian Hyman and his wife Elaine.

During most of her time as Chair of the Events Committee, Muriel was responsible for organizing the Artists' Showcase as well as a strong line-up of events for members each year. Although I had met Muriel and Len



Board Members Natalia Kolodzei and Muriel Moss at the Society of Illustrators in 2011. PHOTO BY GILLIAN HANNUM

Upcoming Print Club Events

October 20, 2020 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Annual Presentation Print unveiling at the National Arts Club, Gramercy Square. Jackets required for men. [Please note, we are hoping conditions will allow us to hold our annual print unveiling in person, but if continued restrictions around COVID-19 make that impossible, we will arrange for the artist talk to be delivered online.]

May 17, 2021 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Print Club Annual Meeting and Artists' Showcase, Society of Illustrators.

earlier, through our joint participation on the Board of Judith Brodsky 's Center for Innovative Print and Paper at Rutgers University (now the Brodsky Center at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts), it is some of the experiences that Muriel and I shared on the Showcase Committee that I remember the most from those years. When the committee made its annual visits to various print shops and studios through the NYC area, Muriel and I would often go for coffee afterward. Muriel was someone who always wanted to go below the surface with people she encountered — to learn something about their history, the challenges they had faced and the accomplishments they had achieved. It is from these kinds of exchanges that deep friendships are forged, and Muriel had many very good friends in her lifetime. She also created an extensive network of contacts in the print world, and when I succeeded Muriel as Chair of the Events committee in 2009, I benefitted greatly from the effective process that she had developed and the connections that she passed on to me.

For many years, Muriel was also a central figure in the Presentation Print Committee, and several of the Club's annual prints are the result of Muriel's contacts with the artists. When she approached artists, Muriel made a persuasive case for the Club's print program, emphasizing the educational mission of the Club and the impact that the selected artist could have on a wide audience of print collectors (and often, museum curators). Former Club president Mona Rubin, who herself became heavily involved in the selection of the presentation artist in subsequent years, credits Muriel for showing her how to make these transactions a win for both artist and Club member.

One such transaction that I experienced with Muriel



Muriel Moss with commissioned artist Chakaia Booker at the Print Club's 25th Anniversary celebration in November 2016. PHOTO BY GILLIAN HANNUM

was the meetings she and I had with Elizabeth Catlett, the artist for the Club's 2005 Presentation Print. Muriel and I twice visited Elizabeth's apartment in Battery Park City, first to discuss the possibility of her doing a print for the Club and then, with our persuasive case successful, to talk about the timetable and the shape of the piece she would be doing. Together, we saw Elizabeth again at the Brodsky Center, where she was working with Randy Hemminghaus and Anne McKeown to develop the print. Watching the then 90-year-old Catlett excitedly immerse herself in the new possibilities of computer imagery was an amazing experience for us all!

Over two decades, Muriel Moss was a central figure in the life of the Print Club of New York. Her official titles — Board member, Recording Secretary, Chair of Events Committee, Coordinator of the Artists' Showcase events—testify to her extensive involvement. But consideration of these titles alone does not capture the energy and the commitment she had to the organization. As Mona Rubin recalls, "Muriel was always the one to raise her hand." If there was a job to be done, Muriel took it on, and there was no stopping her until the job was completed. This same generosity of time and effort was noted by Judy Brodsky as well, recalling Muriel's work on the Brodsky Center Board.

With boundless energy, Muriel contributed organizational savvy, dedication, enthusiasm, and good humor to the work of the Club for two decades. To Muriel Moss, a grateful posthumous toast from the Print Club of New York!

Whistler's Influence On Childe Hassam

Rozanne Cohen

The purpose of this article is to reconsider the influence of Whistler's printmaking on the prints produced by Childe Hassam (1859 – 1935). The focus is on but a small number of works, so much more is to be considered. The focus will be on etching, though Hassam also worked in lithography in various forms. Etching could be learned fairly easily, without major inconveniences; increasingly popular and relatively inexpensive, etchings could be sold easily (Weinberg and Barker 270). Hassam shared this view. In 1927 he said, "I have used the medium of etching as one of the means of artistic expression. It is the most democratic means, because the price of etching being so low, they are within the reach of everybody" (Weinberg and Barker 283). Hassam supplied the elements of texture and color in his etchings by printing onto carefully selected sheets of paper, just as Whistler did.

To begin, Hassam's knowledge of printmaking techniques long preceded his activities as an independent etcher. It wasn't until 1915, when he met Kerr Eby, who kept an etching press in his Cos Cob, Connecticut studio, that Hassam caught true "etching fever" (Larkin 31). Eby's etching style was distinguished by fine lines, subtle tonalities and skillfully "abbreviated" compositions (Weinberg and Barker 269). These elements reflect the compositions of James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834 – 1903) as noted in *The Stamp of Whistler* by Robert H. Getscher (277-78).

During some of his most productive years, between 1896 and 1916, Childe Hassam was drawn repeatedly to Connecticut and resided at an artists' inn in Cos Cob, as well as at times visiting friends J. Alden Weir in nearby Wilton and Frederic Remington in Ridgefield. Born in Boston, trained there and abroad in Paris, Hassam returned to settle in New York. His work in Connecticut was created over two decades (Burnside 5-6). In Cos Cob, the Holley House provided an affordable place for Hassam to lodge. There he developed a genre of figural work devoted to depicting women in interiors who are dressed in either contemporary garb or in a patterned kimono or elaborate robe (Burnside 16).

In the area of printmaking, a major influence upon Hassam was that of American expatriate artist J. A. M. Whistler. Hassam's prints show striking similarities in style, technique and subject matter to Whistler's. For example, both held that a lithograph should be pale and linear with shapes revealed by directional lines (Burgess et. al. 4). Among other Whistlerian influences, the viewer experiences the repeating motif of a fireplace (Pennell n.p.), as well as a woman wearing a Japanese-style kimono. Hassam's *The White Kimono* (etching 1915) depicts a woman standing before a fireplace. The model wears a kimono. By the turn of the 20th century, American women, especially within "artistic" circles, had adopted the Japanese garment as their own (Larkin 165). By giving such prominence to the fireplace opening, Hassam also evokes the ages-old equation between home and hearth. The model faces the fireplace, obscuring her individuality

while concentrating her attention on the focus of her home (Larkin 165).

Whistler was a leading artist driving the taste for Japanese culture, which increasingly gripped Europe and America in the second half of the 19th century. His painting now hanging in the Peacock Room in the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C., *The Princess from the Land of Porcelain*, is a noteworthy early example, painted between 1863 and 1865. His *Symphony in White No. 2*, painted in the winter of 1864, shows the model in Western dress standing before a fireplace, but holding a Japanese fan and with other decorative elements drawn from Japan surrounding her. Hassam's *The White Mantel* (Holley House, Cos Cob) (etching 1915) shows his model in a kimono, seated before a fireplace. Her arms are crossed, and she is lost in thought. The mantel, with its clock, candlestick and vase of flowers, again focuses on intimate prospects. There is a sense of remoteness and inaccessibility as the viewer cannot see beyond the closed interior of the room (Adelson et. al. 112).

Compositional similarities between Hassam and Whistler are demonstrated by comparing Hassam's *Mrs. Hassam Knitting* (lithograph 1918) and Whistler's *Reading by the Lamplight* (etching and drypoint 1858). In both prints, the women are seated and evoke a quiet attitude as they are depicted by the use of artificial light, which at the time was a challenge to artists. *Mrs. Hassam Knitting* was made as a contribution to the American Artists War Emergency Fund in 1918. The image of a woman seen knitting by a lighted lamp is a patriotic statement. The iconography is symbolic of the hope for the safe return of soldiers from the battlefield. The act of knitting for the soldiers is comforting (Burgess et. al. 23).

Joseph Pennell (1857 – 1926) was most famous as a printmaker. His close relationship with Whistler led him and his wife to undertake a biography of Whistler in 1906. In it, Elizabeth Pennell recorded an occasion when Whistler brought his transfer paper to the Pennell home and made a lithograph of her husband, Joseph (Cohen 11). Hassam made a lithograph of Pennell in 1917 that shows Pennell in his studio standing over a lithography press. His back is to the viewer. The scene is framed by a large, sunlit window. Here, Hassam has shown a laborer engaged in a traditional task (Burgess et. al. 21). It is noteworthy that almost all of Hassam's 45 lithographs done during 1917 and 1918 were executed on transfer paper and then printed (Burgess et. al. 21). A particular appeal of transfer paper was that it could easily be taken out-of-doors in order to draw directly from nature.

A related technique called lithotint was used by both Whistler and Hassam. With this technique, the artist uses a brush to apply washes of a black liquid made of the same materials as the lithographic crayon. The artist prepares his lithotints directly on the stone, as opposed to using transfer paper. Hassam's *Storm King* (lithotint 1918) depicts ominous mountains that pierce the cloudy sky and dwarf the minuscule ship (Weinberg and Barker 279). The technique recalls Whistler's *Nocturne: River at Battersea* (lithotint 1878) where the mist of London at evening or dawn transforms the industrial banks of the

Thames (Carnegie Museum 6).

Hassam is often associated with labor and the American work ethic. *The Spar Shop* (lithograph 1918) focuses on men at work in the New England locale of East Gloucester, Massachusetts. Hassam takes the viewer into the spar shop where masts were made for sailing ships. Fishing and boat building were the mainstays of the East Gloucester economy. The industrial interior displays patterns and textures created by sunlight coming through the windows and doors. The surface is an orchestration of rectangles and hatchings. The strong diagonals created by the masts are typical devices to create plunging space (Burgess et. al. 14). Hassam has revisited Whistler's interior work scene depicted in *The Lime Burner* (etching 1859) with its succession of open and closed spaces, leading the eye deeper and deeper into the composition (Lochnan 87).

In contrast to his preoccupation with deep perspective in *The Spar Shop*, Hassam also explored surface pattern. In *Chimneys, Portsmouth* (etching 1915), the viewer sees a landscape across a wide expanse of water. The scene gives equal emphasis to houses and trees as well as bands of water and sky. It is an accurate representation of the Portsmouth waterfront in 1915. Reflections on the water repeat the abstract shapes of the land (Burgess et. al. 15). The composition of bands of water and sky, along with the land's recognizable architecture, is reminiscent of Whistler's *Little Venice* (etching 1884).

It may be said that Whistler ended the European Old Master tradition and began the story of American modernism. Childe Hassam studied Whistler's work and continued the American story. He explored the range of detail in *The Spar Shop*, recalling Whistler's *The Lime Burner*, as well as the flattening of space demonstrated in *The Chimneys, Portsmouth*, reminiscent of Whistler's *Little Venice*, the latter based in part on the study of Japanese woodblock prints. Childe Hassam's importance as a

printmaker resides foremost in the beauty of his etchings and lithographs and he, in turn, led American printmakers in the generations that followed him (Carnegie Museum 3-5).

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The Elephant In The Garden Of Eden

Maryanne Garbowsky

We have all heard the expression "the elephant in the room," meaning that there is something you would rather not talk about. But wait. What about the "elephant in the Garden of Eden"? What is that about? If you have read Genesis, then you are aware that there is no mention of an elephant in the Garden of Eden, yet Rembrandt Van Rijn includes one in his classic etching of *Adam and Eve*. Why does the artist include him and what does he mean? Was it simply a decorative detail or was its presence more significant? The answers to these questions provide an interesting subject to discuss as well as numerous discoveries.

First, this particular elephant was real, one that Rembrandt had seen at the Amsterdam Zoo shortly before completing his etching. Along with being an exotic animal rarely seen in northern Europe at the time, it was also a performing elephant, one that could do many tricks. He became a celebrity and was named Hansken. So impressed was Rembrandt that he did many drawings of him, four that we know of though there were probably

more. The Morgan Library in New York owns one as does the British Museum in London.

But aside from the elephant's many attractions, why would the artist include him in this pivotal moment of biblical history—when Adam and Eve are deciding whether or not to disobey God's command not to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. For the answer to this question, we have to turn to elephant lore.

According to the Roman naturalist/philosopher Pliny, the elephant symbolizes piety. At the new moon, it was said that the elephant would go to the river and sprinkle himself with water in an act of purification. In Rembrandt's etching, the elephant's trunk is raised, perhaps indicating that he has just or is about to douse himself in this ritual act. Added to piety were temperance and chastity. Pliny adds that the elephant never ate to excess and so was deemed temperate. Aristotle further describes the elephant as chaste since during the two-year gestation period of the female, the male elephant abstains from sex.

It was believed that the snake was the natural enemy of



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Adam and Eve*, etching, 1638.
IMAGE COURTESY OF DR. MICHAEL WEIS, KUNSTHANDLUNG
HELMUT H. RUMBLER, FRANKFURT AM MAIN

the elephant, and that the elephant would kill it by trampling it to death. However, in Rembrandt's etching, the

tempter is not pictured as a serpent but rather as a dragon-like creature. Rembrandt was criticized for this change, but it is an interesting one that relates to the elephant as well. One 1607 bestiary includes this description: "dragons being not ignorant that the Elephant feeds upon the fruits and leaves of green trees do secretly convey themselves into them . . . and when the elephant cometh to crop the top of trees, she leaps onto his face" (Statkes).

Such a description may have prompted Rembrandt to alter his interpretation of the snake tempter and make it a dragon creature waiting at the top of the stone arch for his unsuspecting victim. The artist had seen such a creature in Dürer's *Christ's Descent into Limbo*, a print he owned. But more important are the parallels between the innocent Adam and Eve and the elephant who ambles along the path, ignorant of what horror awaits.

Rembrandt's inclusion of the elephant was meant to provide the viewer with added insight. Adam's gesture of warning, his hand thrust between Eve's mouth and the fruit she is about to bite are changes that the artist made, perhaps in an attempt to emphasize that the decision was not easy and that there was conflict between the two. The elephant lore also supports this as well, for in the biblical story it is Eve who first succumbs. In another elephant fable, the female elephant takes her mate to the mandrake tree, where she eats of the fruit and then coaxes him to eat as well. Thus, like Eve, the female elephant is shown to be weaker and/or wiler than the male.

To conclude, Rembrandt knowingly includes the elephant, an actual one, which he drew from life multiple times. Its presence adds greater meaning to an already significant moment in time. We are glad for the elephant "in the Garden of Eden" and for the deeper insight it brings to the significance of the scene.

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IFPDA Online Print Fair And Art During Covid-19

Gillian Greenhill Hannum

The novel coronavirus, which swept around the world in the early months of 2020, has impacted nearly every aspect of daily life, from work, to education, to our finances. Just as many of us have creatively figured out how to do our jobs, participate in religious services or get together with friends in new ways, the art market has also pivoted to an online environment in a bid to bring the work of artists to the attention of potential buyers.

The International Fine Print Dealers Association has already announced the cancellation of its October 2020 fair at the Javits Center, but from May 13 to June 13, it has offered an "online print fair," with "viewing rooms" for each of its participating members. Mounted in partnership with Artsy, it is the largest IFPDA Print Fair ever! Exhibitor fees were waived to support galleries and artists at this difficult time, and over 100 exhibitors signed on.

The work shown ranges from Old Master to Contemporary, originating in Europe, Japan and the U.S. Each "viewing room" shows a collection, or "project," of six to 12 works. The Verne Collection is showing recent work by Sarah Brayer, who did our Club's commissioned print in 2017. Tandem Press features our 2016 commissioned artist, Judy Pfaff, focusing on her Kantha Series of 2017.

Many galleries and non-profits, including International Print Center New York, have followed suit with online exhibitions, viewings and sales. *The New York Times* reported on May 16, 2020 that "Frieze New York Finds Success Online," indicating that the first of the mega-fairs to move online due to COVID-19 did pretty well in the new virtual format. Sales were solid compared with last year's fair, which was held under tents on Randall's Island. While it lacked the excitement and glamor associated with actual art fairs, some enjoyed the slowness and intimacy of the online process.

This forced move to internet buying for art has had an interesting, and potentially very useful, byproduct for dealers and galleries – the ability to collect and analyze data about the tastes, viewing practices and purchases made by collectors. While the data individual businesses can collect and retain is limited by the GDPR, it still offers an opportunity for analysis that did not previously exist. It has also added much more transparency to the mysterious-to-many art market. According to Tim Schneider, writing for Artnet.com on May 21, 2020, “the average observer has never before had more visibility into the

availability of artworks and their costs.” This de-mystification could well expand the art market to those who previously felt out-of-place in galleries and auction houses.

All of this is hopeful news to the many artists who are struggling economically during this pandemic. Members are reminded that current circumstances are especially hard on printmakers, many of whom work collaboratively. So, as you are able, continue to buy prints via some of these new, innovative formats! We look forward to the reopening of galleries in the near future.

Member Notes

Print Club Board member **Newton Paul** was recently interviewed by Miranda Metcalf of Pine | Copper | Lime podcast. This came as a result of his having introduced her to the work of Cuban printmaker Enrique Miralles Tente and to the Asociacion de Grabadores de Cuba (AGC) (1949 – 1968), which reinvigorated the printmaking movement in Cuba. The interview explores how Paul got started collecting prints, how he started to collect work from the AGC and plans for promoting AGC through an exhibition slated for 2022, his involvement in arts organizations, including the Print Club of New York, and his current journey writing his first book on art collecting.

Board member **Allison Tolman** has a brand-new website. You can check it out at www.thetolmancollectionof-newyork.com.

Past Presentation Print Artists

Members may be interested in a recent article in the *New York Times* about **Faith Ringgold**. Titled “Faith Ringgold Will Keep Fighting Back,” this article by Bob Morris was published on June 11, 2020. It can be found at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/11/arts/design/faith-ringgold-art.html>.

Membership renewals have gone out; please be sure to renew by September 1, 2020. If you are not yet a member and would like to join, an application form can be found at www.printclubofnewyork.org.

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