

The Print Club of New York Inc

Summer 1996

President's Greeting

Julian Hyman

The Print Club of New York is completing its fifth year and already has won a reputation as one of the outstanding print clubs in the country for the high quality of its educational events and the outstanding choice of artists for its yearly print selection. We plan to celebrate our anniversary by opening our autumn events program with an Emerging Artists Showcase at the beautiful National Arts Club. Details will be forthcoming in future announcements.

The program committee under the leadership of Dr. Muriel Moss has done an exceptional job. Large and enthusiastic membership turnout marked the March and April events. Sandra Andacht spoke on "Twentieth Century Japanese Prints" to an appreciative audience at the Liederkranz Club. A special viewing at the Hirsch and Adler Galleries of their exhibit "200 Years of American Printmaking" and a gallery tour and talk on Old Master Prints by David Tunick at his gallery were both outstanding events and well attended.

On May 21 the Club hosts a meeting featuring a panel discussion on artists and prints of the WPA period. The panel of eminent experts includes Will Barnet, Sylvan Cole, Grace Glueck, Susan Teller and Ms. Elliot Davis. Ms. Davis is the curator of a current show of WPA color prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

When invoices are mailed for 1996-97 membership renewal, we will enclose a questionnaire asking members to let us know of their special interests concerning prints and whether they would like to serve on Club committees. Several positions on major committees will be available and requests for participation will be considered by committee chairpersons. We urge our members to respond to this brief survey in order that we may tailor our events to the interests of our members. Some of these events may be limited because of space requirements, but those that are unlimited will be open to all members and their friends. We urge you to attend and hope to see an even greater participation at our Fall events.

I take personal pride in the progress that our Club has made during the past year, and I want to thank the many people who are responsible for its success. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all the members and their families a most relaxing and enjoyable summer.

Board Notes

Michael Dym has recently resigned from the Board of Trustees. Michael was one of the founding members of the Club and has served as its Vice President and a member of the Print Selection Committee. We owe Michael many thanks for his important achievements during his term on the Board.

Club officers for 1996-97 elected at the May 14 Board of Trustees meeting are: Julian Hyman, President; Charles Seidman, Vice-President; Norman Brock, Treasurer; Elaine Hyman, Recording Secretary and Geri Mickenberg, Corresponding Secretary.

New Board members are Peter Heller and Dr. Leonard Moss.

The Board of Trustees meets regularly every two months to conduct Club business. They are performing a very important function and doing it well. A special thanks goes to the wonderful effort of the Publications Committee under the leadership of Jean Melden and Arlyne Lesser.

A last note is that we wish a speedy recovery to Trustee and Corresponding Secretary Geri Mickenberg's husband, Mick.

Print Club Events

Plans are being made for an exciting Fall season of events. Among these are:

- A Showcase for Emerging Artists to be held at the National Arts Club
- An evening devoted to the preservation and restoration of works on paper
- A membership event to be held in connection with the November Print Fair
- A December Sell and Swap Evening where members can trade prints or sell them to fellow members.

Details on these and other events will follow.

Collecting Illustrated Books

Dan Redmon

Some frequently used terms by collectors of book arts are: 1) the *livre d'artiste* which is normally distinguished by its art and its lavish production values and can at times cost as much if not more than a single contemporary or modern print; 2) the *artist's book*, a "hands-on" work from the artist's conception through its development and distribution, usually in a limited, signed editions; and 3) the *illustrated book* which is a mechanical repetition of the conventional distinction between image and text and is usually unlimited, unsigned and, in most cases, inexpensive. For the purposes of this article, I am concentrating on the *illustrated book*, not to be confused, however, with illustrated or Press Books from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, an entirely different collector's category.

When the prices of prints escalated in the mid 1980's, I started looking for less expensive alternatives to collecting art in the print format. This alternative is the illustrated book and after collecting these books for a number of years, I have concluded that they can be well crafted, interesting, experimental and purchased from \$10 to \$125. Most have been produced in collaboration with famous or not-so-famous contemporary artists and have often increased in value. There are many places in New York City to find such reasonably priced illustrated books.

Illustrated books are often produced with the cooperation of galleries like Brooke Alexander or Pace Editions. Normally they are not on display, so the collector should ask the gallery if it has recently produced any illustrated or artists' books. Brooke Alexander, for example, sold a signed and limited edition with two drawings by the artist Yvonne Jacquette for \$50. In 1994 the Mary Ryan Gallery offered a small, signed and limited edition by the artist David Schorr for \$25. It may be remembered that Yvonne Jacquette lectured at a Print Club meeting and that David Schorr was one of the artists featured at last year's Showcase event.

My favorite place for illustrated books is The Printed Matter located on Wooster Street. Here young artists are given a place to show their work which is often political or experimental. I find these works extremely interesting and inexpensive, ranging from \$8 to \$50. Even established artists like Baldessari, Rucha, Sol LeWitt and R. Tuttle have created unsigned, limited editions for under \$50 which today sell for a much higher price.

Peter Blum's store on Wooster sells very desirable trade editions of his deluxe books. These typically are limited to less than a thousand copies and cost between \$55 to \$100. The unsigned trade edition of L. Bourgeois and A. Miller's book, *Homely Girl—A Life* was released at \$100, limited to 1200 copies and exhibited at MOMA's retrospective show, "A Century of Artist's Books." The unsigned trade edition of Anselm Stalder's *The Limits of Perception* was limited to an edition of 545 and released at \$55. What I consider a prize is Kekroth's *TUFU* with art work by Brice Marden, limited to 800 unsigned copies and priced at \$95.

Book Fairs at the 67th Street Armory, Trinity School and Greenwich Village as well as many flea markets often will offer illustrated books by living artists. These, however, may be costly. Writing directly to the publisher or artist, you may receive information on their latest publications which are normally offered at a lower cost. For example, at the 1995 Armory Book Fair, I found a small book for \$150 benefiting Yosemite National Park of California. This was an edition of 500 with 100 copies signed and illustrated by Wayne Thiebaud. I wrote to the Yosemite Association asking whether any of the illustrated copies were still available. They responded to my inquiries and I was able to buy a copy for \$100. I recently have seen the book offered for \$500.

MOMA's Art Projects Program publishes inexpensive illustrated books which are normally unlimited trade editions selling from \$2 to \$25. Periodically, they feature a Discount shelf in their bookstore. A few years ago, I bought Jorg Immendorff and A.R. Penck's *Brandenburger Tor Weltfrage* for \$7 and an 1982 copy of Richard Bosman's *Exit the Face* for \$2 on that shelf. Recently, I have seen both books priced from \$75 to \$100 at Book Fairs. MOMA also sells more expensive signed and limited illustrated books, but members receive a 10% discount.

At the Mezzanine Gallery of the Metropolitan Museum of Art I have come across reasonably priced books by Howard Hodgkin, Jim Dine or Chema Cobo along with more expensive illustrated books. I have seen limited editions by Baskin and even small prints by established artists priced from \$100 to \$150, again with a 10% reduction for members. On occasion, museums will produce low cost illustrated books, artist's books, *livre d'artiste* volumes and prints to raise money for their different departments.

Janus, Gehenna and Cheloniidae Press, working within the tradition of the *livre d'artiste*, sometimes sell their smaller deluxe books for \$125 at a pre-publication price. These are limited editions and signed by artists such as Leonard Baskin, Alan James Robinson and Barry Moser. If you are quick, you may find these works at various book dealers and in numerous art book catalogues. Often I have found it worthwhile to browse through lesser known book dealers' catalogues because there is a healthy competition between the large store-front booksellers and the smaller dealers who work out of their homes.

Recently, I received a publication that is devoted mainly to contemporary living artists and the books are very reasonably priced. The catalogue contains numerous photos and descriptions of books that have been produced by Granary Books, Barbara Bloom, Verlag, Book Works etc. For a free catalogue write to: D.A.P., c/o Craig Willis, 636 Broadway, 12th floor, New York, NY, 10012. Even though Granary Books produces and sells higher priced illustrated and artist's books, it is well worth a trip downtown to 568 Broadway to see some of these remarkably crafted works.

Reference books that are well worth the \$25 or \$35 price are: 1) Johanna Drucker's *The Century of Artists' Books*, an excellent academic history, and 2) Boca Raton Museum of Art's *Books as Art* which features photos of illustrated books produced during the past 30 years.

Spring Membership Events

Talk on Twentieth Century Japanese Prints

A large and enthusiastic membership turnout marked Sandra Andacht's March 27 talk on Twentieth Century Japanese Prints. Ms. Andacht is a university lecturer, author, editor of the *Orientalia Journal* and a member of the Executive Board of the National Association of Dealers in Antiques (NADA). The program provided a fascinating overview of an aspect of woodblock prints that is not as accessible as the more traditional 18th and 19th century masters. Using original prints as well as slides, Ms. Andacht reviewed the work of four artists: Hasui, the most prolific twentieth century artist whose realistic, almost photographic, style was particularly appealing to western tastes; Shiro Kasamatsu, noted for his use of color to convey illumination, a twentieth century innovation in the art of Japanese printmaking; Hiroshi Yoshida, whose prints with muted color and subtle detail reflect his travel abroad as well as Japanese scenes; and Paul Jacoulet, born of French parents but growing up in Japan, whose prints are marked by their use of the art deco style.

Ms. Andacht pointed out that unlike the stylized, almost caricature-like woodcuts of the 18th and 19th centuries, the works of these pre-World War II artists all showed a commitment to a realistic style that would sell in the West. Early twentieth century prints were published largely for sales abroad, and it is only recently that Japanese collectors have been buying them back.

Reviewing some of the points to look for as a collector, Ms. Andacht stressed the following: pre or post 1923 dating, early prints before the blocks were destroyed by the 1923 earthquake having a greater value; type and quality of Japanese paper which was made from the mulberry tree; the importance of condition and the absence of toning, foxing and staining which cannot be removed from Japanese paper; color registration of the large number of color blocks used by the artists; identification by size and type of the publisher's and the artist's seals of authenticity; presence of a strong negative image on the back of the print; and the presence of unusual subject matter such as night scenes and scenes with color illumination or shadow.

Ms. Andacht's expertise and the enthusiasm with which she presented the artists and their works made for a memorable evening. She introduced her audience to an exotic but fascinating field of print collecting. We thank her and hope she will return to speak on another aspect of Japanese printmaking.

200 Years of Printmaking in America at the Hirschl & Adler Galleries.

On April 8, the Hirschl & Adler Galleries hosted a special viewing of its exhibit, *200 years of Printmaking in America* for members of The Print Club of New York. Joseph Goddu, Director, Department of American Prints, gave a gallery talk including an overview of the exhibit but focusing on the more important and unusual works.

Among the early prints included in the show was a rare hand-colored engraving by Amos Doolittle, entitled "A Display of the United States of America." First issued in 1789, Doolittle's engraving was a celebration of the Constitution and the new federal government. As Joseph Goddu pointed out, it provides one of the first iconographic representations of the new American Republic. Another work of historical importance was a pair of hand-colored mezzotint portraits of Lady Washington and His Excellency George Washington, Esq. Attributed to the engraver, Joseph Heller and based upon paintings by Charles Wilson Peale, this work represents the earliest depiction of Washington as Commander-in-Chief and the earliest graphic representation of Martha Washington.

An exhibit of American printmaking would not be complete without the work of John James Audubon and Currier & Ives. Mr. Goddu showed our members a pristine impression of "Summer or Wood Duck" from the production of 435 hand-colored engravings in *The Birds of America*. His discussion of Audubon and his work was fascinating. Among the many outstanding Currier & Ives prints in the exhibit was "The 'Lightning Express' Trains; 'Leaving the Junction.'"

"Highlights of the twentieth century included such American graphic icons as Hopper's "Evening Wind," Martin Lewis' "Quarter of Nine, Saturday's Children," and George Bellows' "Dempsey and Firpo." The exhibition also included works by Mary Cassatt, James MacNeill Whistler, Arthur Wesley Dow, Childe Hassam, Louis Lozowick, Stuart Davis, John Storrs, and Ralston Crawford among others.

Our special thanks to Mr. Goddu for sharing his infectious love of American prints and for his delightful and informative presentation.

Rare Prints at the David Tunick Gallery

Print Club members spent a fascinating evening on April 23 with David Tunick, prominent print collector and dealer. Mr. Tunick took us through his landmark home and gallery where he displays prints from the 16th through the 20th centuries.

It was a special privilege to view Mr. Tunick's collection of museum quality prints and rare works in pristine condition. He also shared his immense expertise in art history with Club members, pointing out the provenance and history of these prints and their significance as works of art. Among the highlights were Durer's "Melancholia," which may be the earliest existing impression of the print; two of the Four Bathers prints done by Cezanne, one of which had belonged to Lawrence Rockefeller; a 1923 Chagall dry point, hand painted by Chagall with extra figures painted in, which had been in Chagall's possession until his death; two rare Degas' lithographs from the same stone showing an extreme simplification of design in the later stone; a 1913 "Woolworth Building" which had been owned by Stieglitz, and a complete set of Bellows boxing prints, the only other complete sets being held by the Amon Carter Museum and the Boston Public Library. Mr. Tunick also showed us selections from his personal collection of French 18th century prints.

In addition to enjoying Mr. Tunick's memorable collection and his knowledgeable and entertaining lecture on these works, he also provided members with important information on how to develop connoisseurship, that judgement of quality which is so indispensable for the print collector. In order to arrive at such a judgement, Mr. Tunick made the following suggestions: that collectors determine whether a print is real or a fake by going to a catalog raisonné and consulting with an expert; that they determine the relative importance of the artist and the importance of the subject and size of the print; that they determine the period in the artist's career in which the print was made and the rarity of the impression; that they consider the quality of the impression, whether it is an early state, printed from a worn plate, or a posthumous impression, all of which have a significant influence on the value of the print. Additionally, Mr. Tunick stressed the primary importance of condition as a crucial measure of a print's value, and the importance of access to a good art library as the basis for an informed judgement.

Mr. Tunick's knowledge of art and artists which he graciously shared with us as we toured his beautiful home and gallery made this truly a memorable evening. We came away enriched by the experience, and we wish to thank Mr. Tunick for making it possible.

Art Tour at the Hebrew Home for the Aged at Riverdale

Members of the Print Club who visited the Hebrew Home for the Aged at Riverdale on May 8 were introduced to the beauty of its surroundings and the breadth of its art collection. Curator Susan Putterman and Assistant Curator Melissa Radford led members through a selection of some of the 3,500 works that make up the collection. A member of the American Association of Museums, the Home's permanent collection includes contemporary and modern paintings, prints, sculpture, primitive art, folk art and interactive installations.

On the broad sweep of lawn overlooking the Hudson River members viewed several large steel free-form sculptures and two works by internationally known artist Menashe Kadishman. These are on loan until they are moved to the Olympic art show in Atlanta. The most recent addition to the Home's collection is the award winning Hudson River Garden Railroad. Created by Paul Busse from natural materials, this diorama features doll-sized buildings based on the historic houses and hilly terrain of the Hudson valley with the New York Central railroad running through the villages and tunnels.

Walking through the lovely lounges, halls and sunlit public rooms, members viewed prints by Picasso, Warhol, Vasarely and Chagall as well as wonderful Calder drawings for his "Circus" sculpture at the Whitney. A great Frank Stella wall piece, a Will Barnet color print, and an outstanding photography collection were some of the works on permanent display. There are also larger than lifesize blowups of early 20th century scenes of immigrant life in lower Manhattan, including Steichen's "Steerage" and works by Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, and Alice Austen.

In addition to the permanent collection, the Elma and Milton Gilbert Pavilion houses a gallery for rotating loan exhibitions overseen by the curator Ms. Putterman. Last year's Ernest Fiene show was reviewed by William Zimmer in the *New York Times*. The current exhibition features the work of Charles Parness known for his brightly colored and witty paintings reminiscent of 18th century painting and satire. "There's a little bit of Jonathan Swift in him," Ms. Putterman commented.

Almost all of the Home's vast collection has been acquired by donations, and a modest fund is dedicated to augment and care for it. We want to thank both curators for giving us such a wonderful tour. Because of the enthusiasm expressed by those who attended the event, we hope to repeat the visit again in the future.

Sol LeWitt's Minimal Prints

Mona Rubin

An excellent retrospective of Sol LeWitt's minimal prints was recently shown at the Museum of Modern Art. People generally associate LeWitt with his large scale painted walls or sculptures. However, he has also applied his permutations of grids and lines to different print processes, and these comprise an important body of his work over the past 30 years.

LeWitt published his first prints in 1970. One reason that LeWitt was probably drawn to the technique of printmaking is that it lent itself to the concept behind his art. It gave him the ability to change colors, add lines and add layers through a series of prints. Most of LeWitt's work in all media involves the series concept, and printmaking became an important vehicle for this technique.

"Bands of Color in Four Directions & All Combinations" was one of his earliest print series, a set of etchings produced at Crown Point Press. An entire set of 16 images was produced by manipulating only two plates. At the same time LeWitt was also making screen prints with the printer John Campione. In the same way that draftsmen applied LeWitt's imagery to walls, he worked closely with printers who carried out his instructions in creating the print.

In the 1980's LeWitt's printmaking paralleled changes

in his drawings. He started using gray ink washes, a step away from his more vibrant colors, and there is also more emphasis on tone and surface. These changes coincide with the appearance of aquatint in his prints.

From the mid 1970's on, LeWitt has worked closely with the printer Jo Watanabe who once worked as one of his wall drawing assistants. Together they have produced a large number of prints including a new use of woodcut. In many of these woodcuts layered colors create an exquisite surface.

One can easily be misled by the labeling applied to LeWitt's work. He is a conceptual artist who relies on a strict set of ideas or concepts upon which to base his work. His repetitious imagery of grids and squares may sound tedious and uninteresting. However, a view of his series prints shows how aesthetically pleasing and creative these simple concepts become in the hands of a true artist. From the variety of simple geometric shapes to the works that rely on the placement of words and finally to the later freer forms, all of these prints demonstrate a superior quality of printmaking and the use of innovative techniques. From the building blocks of mathematics, line and color, LeWitt brings us a unique world of beautiful forms.

Buying At Auction: Some Instructive Anecdotes

Ruth Davis

Rather than telling you how to buy a print at auction, I will share some of my own experiences as a professional dealer in decorative arts for the past 30 years.

A large lot of Lester Hornby prints were being auctioned in another state and two friends decided to try and buy what they could. It was agreed that the one with experience in bidding would do so and the one who was the best judge of value would advise. These lots were heavily contested by very enthusiastic fans of the artist. With this kind of frenetic bidding, unbounded enthusiasm can get you into trouble. The auctioneer suddenly stopped the bidding and asked me if I was aware of the man bidding beside me, knowing that we had come together and I was the designated bidder. That "other bidder" was none other than Print Club President, Julian Hyman. So much for auction enthusiasm. The auctioneer reopened at a lower level, and we were very successful.

I saw an absolutely wonderful Feininger print estimated at \$80 in a small, offbeat auction house. I could hardly restrain myself. However, in a house this small asking to see the print out of frame is very difficult. You certainly don't want to arouse suspicion that there might be a hidden treasure here. The bidding went quickly to \$800, and I pulled back. It was a 16" by 20" print and well worth

beyond \$800, but this was a cash and carry sale and I hadn't seen it out of frame. I let it go. A few days later I paid the antique store owner who had bought the print \$80—it was a reproduction. I will never buy a print unless it is out of frame. Big auction houses will take it out of the frame and there is a special condition report, if you know to ask, which is available in addition to the description in the catalogue. However, do not expect people to come forth voluntarily with all this information.

A dear friend who is a professional print dealer of 15 years standing had a disastrous experience at auction. He bought a Dali print from a well known auction house outside of New York City. The print cost \$11,000 and was guaranteed by the consigning gallery. He had done some preliminary work, and the specifications of size, color and content were correct. After his purchase, he was informed by the experts he consulted that the print was a forgery, and, upon reflection, he agreed. He went back to the auction house only to learn that the guarantee that had been given was from a gallery that was out of business. The auction house was not liable, and the dealer had no recourse. There is not one of us who has not been stung at one time or another.

In conclusion: there is no substitute for scholarship and experience, but even so, buyer beware.

Members' Column

Members are invited to share their knowledge, experience and expertise with other members. The Newsletter will publish members' request for information about particular artists, prints, editions, exhibits etc. Members are also invited to submit Letters to the Editor and to share their "discoveries" in the Newsletter. Please let us know if you come across an exciting small museum, a particularly interesting show, an artist you wish to call to our attention or an issue that you think should be discussed. We would particularly like to hear from our out-of-town members. Please call Arlyne Lesser at (201)567-0170 or write to The Print Club of New York, Inc., P.O. Box 4477, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

Also, members are reminded that the Program Committee welcomes their suggestions for future Club events. Please call Dr. Muriel Moss at (212) 213-8439 with your suggestion or write to the address above.

Call For Articles

The Publications Committee is always searching for interesting articles to publish. Writings about artists, books, conservation of prints, museums, exhibits, little known facts, interviews with people involved in the art world etc. are but a few types of articles that can be contributed. You do not have to be a "great writer," as we can edit your work. It might be fun to see your name in print!

Classified Ads Available

The Club offers a classified ads service. If you want to buy, sell or swap a print or if you wish to advertise your services, these pages are available to you. To place an ad in the next newsletter for a nominal fee, call Arlyne Lesser at 201-567-0170.

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P.O. Box 4477 Grand Central Station
New York, N.Y. 10163