

The Print Club of New York Inc

Fall 1998

President's Greeting

The Print Club of New York opened its seventh year on September 17 with the presentation of a beautiful lithograph entitled, "Between Life and Life" by the renowned artist Will Barnet. This print continues the tradition of excellence in our choice of artists for our Presentation Print. Our annual Artists' Showcase held at the National Arts Club on October 20 attracted a greater number of artists submitting entries to this event than ever before. The diverse range and high calibre of the artists represented proved of great interest to our members and their guests.

The Board of Trustees of the Print Club again extend an invitation to all of our members to take a more active role in our Club by attending as many events as they can and by joining one of our active committees. We look forward to your suggestions and recommendations for improving our organization.

By now our members have received the 1998 Presentation Print. We wish to apologize to those members whose prints arrived last year in damaged condition. We assure you that we made every effort to insure that this would not happen in 1998. We hope that all of our members enjoy this year's beautiful print, and we hope to see many of you at our future meetings.

The Print Club of New York, Inc.

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Officers:

Dr. Julian Hyman, *President*
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Geri Mickenberg

Newsletter Editor:

Arlyne Lesser



PHOTO BY MARVIN BOLOTSKY

"Between Life and Life" by Will Barnet

The Print Club's 1997 Presentation Print

"Between Life and Life," a black and white lithograph by Will Barnet is the 1998 Presentation Print. In the print Mr. Barnet again reveals his intense interest in the poems of Emily Dickinson which led to the publication of the book *World in a Frame* illustrated by Mr. Barnet. Dickinson's poem #1101, whose first line provides a title for the print, inspired the genesis of the drawing which ultimately became the lithograph. The poem is an expression of the familiar Dickinson contrast between the material and the spiritual life, the latter providing the true ecstasy, or wine of life. Although the artist considered the use of color in the print, he concluded that black and white imagery was most appropriate for expressing the mood of the poem.

Mr. Barnet has had a distinguished career as painter and printmaker, winning numerous honors and awards during his long career. He has appeared in galleries and museum shows world wide and is represented in the permanent collections of major museums. Currently a retrospective of "Will Barnet Prints" including 36 of the artist's finest prints from the mid 1930's to the present is on exhibition at the Portland, Maine Museum of Art and a retrospective of his abstract work was held recently at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery in New York City.

We are fortunate in having the opportunity to add a Will Barnet print to our collections. We also would like to thank Mr. Barnet for agreeing to speak to Club Members at the Sept. 17 meeting at which he introduced the 1988 Presentation Print. More than 60 members were in attendance at the event. Speaking informally, Mr. Barnet reviewed his development as an artist, particularly the

relationship between his painting and printmaking. As he did so, he also provided listeners with a capsule history of printmaking from the 1920's to the present, an evolution of styles and techniques in which Mr. Barnet has played a major role as printmaker, painter and teacher for over 50 years.

Daumier, Mr. Barnet commented, was his early idol, an influence he recognized as the basis of a split between modern and classic which continued to affect his outlook on art down to the present. Thus, while influenced by the lithographs of Daumier who used scenes of common life as his subject, Mr. Barnet was also receiving classic training. On the streets he would sketch people and the world around him. In Art School at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston he studied the work of Gêrome, Ingres and the Dutch painters. Although Mr. Barnet was not an active printmaker in the 1920's, he became aware of etching as the dominant medium of the time, its imagery of architecture and landscapes appealing to the small group of upper middle class collectors who dominated the market.

In 1930 Mr. Barnet moved to New York where the center of the art world was the Art Students League, a hot bed of controversy and artists opposed to each other over issues such as regionalism, social realism, abstraction etc. Here Mr. Barnet began to study printmaking, particularly lithography which at that time meant using lithographic stones. Lithography in the 1930's took the place of etching as a key medium. However, it was a difficult medium to print, and Mr. Barnet saw printing as a way to make a living during the Depression. By 1936 he was established as a professional printer and the youngest instructor of graphic arts ever to hold faculty rank at the League. Mr. Barnet was also hired to become technical advisor to the WPA print project during this period. Among those for whom he printed were Orozco, Raphael Soyer and Louis Lozowick. At the same time Mr. Barnet, who intimately knew the intricacies of the print making process, created his own lithographs, mainly in black and white which was the dominant style of the 1930's. During this period he was a great admirer of Orozco and Thomas Hart Benton who believed in American regionalism in contrast to European interest in abstraction which was beginning to affect American artists.

Mr. Barnet characterized lithographs in the 30's as a proletariat medium, trying to serve the workers of the world. During this period Mr. Barnet became well known as a printmaker, working with woodcut as well as lithography. In fact he felt that he had become too intimately associated with printmaking and since he wanted to be known for his painting as well, between 1940 and 1950 he refused to show his prints. By 1950 he was known as Will Barnet the painter, and he then began to show prints



PHOTO BY MARVIN BOLOTSKY

again.

The synergy between painting and printmaking which Mr. Barnet has demonstrated throughout his career he believes is crucial for the artist. Some of the greatest prints, he pointed out, have been made by painters. To create a great print he believes the artist needs a sense of the image, of the central perception or idea which informs the work. This is easier to obtain with greater immediacy and fullness on canvas whereas the printmaker may be hindered initially by the demands of the printmaking medium. It is this more immediate free-

dom to perceive and capture the idea or the central image which Mr. Barnet believes lies behind the successful print as well. Hence, Mr. Barnet has always considered painting and printmaking as aspects of the whole artistic process and working on graphic art as well as painting became a way of life for him.

Continuing his informal survey of printmaking and his own role in its development, Mr. Barnet commented that by the 1950's color lithography and silk screen printing had become important techniques. In the 1930's silk screen was used as a propaganda medium rather than a fine art technique, but by the 1950's silk screen became respectable, Carl Zigrosser dignifying it by calling it serigraph. Mr. Barnet started to work in silk screen and found he liked the medium because colors were easier to work with than in lithography. Also, Mr. Barnet commented that after World War II a new and wider class of print buyer came into being. These were people moving up in scale, with money, better educations, and interested in artistic culture. In his own work from the 1940's to the 1960's he began to explore more abstract imagery, to focus primarily on color and form. He made his color breakthrough, he noted, in the 1950's. Mr. Barnet returned to overt figuration in the late 1960's and 1970's although he retained the color and spatial relationships of his more abstract work.

Mr. Barnet considered the 1970's as his "Renaissance," a Renaissance of printmaking in which the general public became involved with prints. Editions of 100 would sell out and printmakers had the freedom to express themselves, knowing an appreciative audience would buy their works. Hence, artists noted primarily for their painting experimented with printmaking techniques in the 1970's. Currently, Mr. Barnet noted, bringing his history of printmaking up to date, computer prints are becoming an important medium, Mr. Barnet fears that this process loses the physical involvement of the artist with his medium, to him a crucial element in the creation of a print. Computer prints produce a flat veneer of color produced by a machine and lacking the evidence of the artist painstakingly building up the color. This physical evidence of the artist in his work has been lost in the com-

puter print, although Mr. Barnet cautioned that he has taught for 50 years and each generation has had qualities to be valued.

Turning to the content of his work, Mr. Barnet stressed that he always has had an interest in people and human relations, an interest in the every day life of people which he took early on from Daumier. As he grew older his New England background became a source of great interest, and he turned to it for imagery. For his "Women of the Sea" series he went to Maine and became enamored of the rocks and ocean, of the heroic nature of the forms he saw in the landscape. Here, too, his interest in human activities led him to put figures into the landscape. It was this interest in New England life and character, a return to his roots in a way, that also led him to his three year involvement with Emily Dickinson. Recently he has been concentrating on works representing the passing of time.

Finally, commenting on the process of creating "Between Life and Life," the Club's Presentation Print, Mr. Barnet volunteered that the print had given him particular difficulties because it was difficult to print. His aim was to give the print the quality of a drawing. To do so he had to use five plates to achieve different tonalities and

subtle gradations of color within the "black and white." Finding the right paper that would give a sense of the richness of drawing paper also became an important quest. Mr. Barnet stated that he believes this print to be one of his finest works because he was able to fulfill his intention of successfully conveying the sense of a drawing in the print medium.

Will Barnet is a world renowned painter and printmaker. He has taught for over 50 years and has become a recognized master of print media. He is also a delightful speaker, warm, generous of his time and anxious to convey to his audience the experience of a life lived in art. Print Club members took away with them not only an appreciation of his beautiful print, but also an understanding of the important role Mr. Barnet has played in the history of printmaking for half a century.

Note: In the 1950's Mr. Barnet became conscious of his New England background and began to donate his prints to the Public Library in Beverley, MA. By the 70's and 80's he was giving the Library a copy of each of his works. The Barnet room at the Library provides a wonderful retrospective of Mr. Barnet's work which Print Club members would enjoy visiting.

Officers and Board of Trustees Elected at Annual Meeting

The annual membership meeting of the Print Club of New York was held on June 2. Members were invited to attend a get-acquainted cocktail party and to vote on the Print Club slate of Officers and Members of the Board of Trustees. Although 60 members who could not attend had sent in their absentee ballots, a large turnout marked this event which also considered changes in the Charter and By-Laws of the Club.

The following slate of officers and Board Members were accepted by acclamation:

President: Dr. Julian Hyman
Vice President: Charles Seidman
Treasurer: Norman Brock
Recording Secretary: Elaine Hyman
Corresponding Secretary: Geri Mickenberg

Members of the Board of Trustees
Marvin Bolotsky Arlyne Lesser
Harriet Burdock Dr. Leonard Moss

Matthew Collins Dr. Muriel Moss
Ruth Davis Martin Seham
Clifford Feder Ernest Shapiro
Peter Heller

Sylvie Gallagher, a founding member of the Club, and Morley Melden, its past President were elected Honorary Members of the Board.

Committee Chairs are:

Print Selection: Ruth Davis
Membership: Marvin Bolotsky
Events: Dr. Muriel Moss
Newsletter: Arlyne Lesser

Dr. Hyman invited all members to communicate their suggestions as to the direction of the Club, comments on the programs and ideas for future events to the Officers, Board Members and Committee Chairs.

Carole and Alex Rosenberg Speak on Cuban Art

Elaine Hyman

On May 27, Print Club members Carole and Alex Rosenberg for many years, who were print publishers at Transworld Art graciously opened their apartment to the Print Club for a rare opportunity to view their collection of contemporary Cuban art. Members also had the opportunity to view and enjoy the Rosenbergs' important collection of prints, paintings and sculpture by Henry Moore and Dali.

The Rosenbergs who have made at least 20 trips to

Cuba gave a brief history of Cuban art focusing on what has happened in the Cuban art world since the Castro revolution. In the past, during the period of Russian presence in Cuba, artists were treated as union workers and paid by the government. Those artists who left and came to Miami would too often succumb to tourist taste in producing commercial work. For those who remained, the Rosenbergs explained how in the face of scarcity of materials Cuban artists had become very creative and that many of the most important works are at the highest international level. Members were fortunate in being able

Upcoming Print Club Events

Thursday, November 19, 6-8 p.m.

Art Walk. A walk through three major galleries which have moved into Chelsea's exciting new art district and an opportunity to view their current exhibitions. The tour will begin with Karen McCready Fine Art at 425 West 13th Street, 5th floor (between 9th Ave and Washington St.), then continue to Long Fine Art, 427 West 14th Street, Ground Floor (between 9th and 10th Avenues) and close with Jim Kempner Fine Art, 501 West 23rd St., 2nd Floor (corner of 10th Avenue and 23rd St). Not only does this Art Walk provide an introduction to the fast expanding and exciting new art district, but also to the many interesting shops and restaurants which have also opened in this "new Soho."

Wednesday, February 17, 6 p.m.

Robert Rainwater, Asst. Director of the Art, Prints and Photograph Division and Curator of the Spencer Collection at the New York Public Library will speak on the Library's renowned Spencer Collection. The Collection contains illustrated books of the 15th through 20th centuries and Oriental manuscripts and scrolls dating back to 770 A.D. The meeting will be held in the Art Division, Room 313, and due to limited space reservations are necessary. R.S.V.P. by calling Harriet Burdock at (201) 944-0674 between 8 and 10 p.m.

Also of Interest to Print Club Members

Print Club members Reba and Dave Williams collection of American prints number over 5000, include 2000 artists and is one of the largest private collections of American prints. An exhibition from this collection featuring 19th century American prints is at the New York Historical Society, 2 West 77th Street, until January 10, 1999.

Another exhibition, "All-Stars: American Sporting Prints from the Collection of Reba and Dave Williams" is at the Emily Lowe Gallery of the Hofstra University Museum from November 8 to December 18, 1998.

"Master Drawings from the Hermitage and Pushkin Museums" is at the Morgan Library until January 10, 1999.

"Artists and Avant Garde Theater in Paris, 1887-1900", features theater programs illustrated by prominent artists including Toulouse-Lautrec, Munch, Vuillard, Bonnard and Signac. At the National Academy Museum, 1083 Fifth Ave. at 89th Street through Jan. 3, 1999.

to view some of these fine works in the Rosenbergs' personal collection.

Mr. Rosenberg is a visiting professor at the ISA Institute, a graduate school of fine arts in Havana. Mr. and Mrs. Rosenberg are also Board Members of the Ludwig Foundation of Cuba, a foundation formed by the famous art collector Peter Ludwig of Germany for promoting young Cuban artists around the world and for bringing international exhibitions to Cuba.

We thank our members, Alex and Carole Rosenberg for a delightful evening, for their hospitality and for introducing us to the work of a talented group of artists and a cultural flowering in Cuba that has opened a whole new field of interest for our members.

Fifth Annual Artist's Showcase

Diversity of style and technique marked the Fifth Annual Artist's Showcase held on October 20 at the beautiful National Arts Club in Gramercy Square. Events Chairman Muriel Moss welcomed members and their guests and presented five artists whose work displayed the wide range of printmaking today. The artists were Gary Jurysta, James Pernotto, Merle Perlmutter, Carson Fox and Masaaki Noda. The artists described how their training, life experiences and view of art had influenced their careers. They also provided a survey of their work through slides and the large number of prints each artist had brought for viewing.

Gary Jurysta stressed the relationship between his painting and his printmaking. In both he has always sought spontaneity and an expression of energy which would inform both the canvas and the print. He explained how his career as a printmaker began with hard edged abstract prints embodying collage elements in the manner of his painting. More recently he has been trying to achieve the same spontaneity and energy with acrylic paints on a flat canvas as well as in his etched, abstract prints.

James Pernotto reviewed the evolution of his thirty years as a painter and printmaker. He too stressed the dialogue between the two processes as well as his interest in making books as a source of images for his prints as well as his paintings. His work in the 1970's used pop imagery of the time, but with a harder edge picturing side show freaks, tattoo parlors and fighters. In the 1980's Mr. Pernotto began to work on large scale installations which again produced images for his prints such as the tongues of fire images in his woodcuts of the period. Throughout his career he has been fascinated by works on paper and in the late 1980's he began to make books which again generated images for both his paintings and woodcuts. His recent images which appear in his drypoint and mezzotint prints are those of women, and he is also experimenting with the technique of weaving paper together, of juxtaposing an image from one page with that from another.

Merle Perlmutter dispensed with slides completely in order to allow member to focus directly on her large and challenging prints, once described in the *New York Times*

as looking at the world through the wrong end of a telescope. Ms. Perlmutter described her work in the same terms, as a challenge which must be confronted directly by the viewer. Her aim is to look at the scene in a different way from the traditional artist who depicts a room from a single perspective. She wants to show both time and space on a flat piece of paper, presenting the image of a room as if the viewer were simultaneously perceiving the present room, the room beyond and the one beyond that. Bending time and space through changing and curving lines defines her work. Ms. Perlmutter uses soft ground mezzotint, again explaining she enjoyed the challenge of using this medium. Although Ms. Perlmutter's space bending prints tend to be large, she also works in miniatures and members were able to view these as well.

Testifying to the diversity of style and technique represented in this year's Showcase, Carson Fox presented a series of women's portraits using drypoint as her special medium. The female figure is the vehicle for her own self-expression, and she has created a series of portraits and of nudes. Although she has experimented with a combination of photography and etching, her most recent prints have returned to the traditional medium of drawing on the plate primarily using drypoint, although she also works with engraving and aquatint. Rembrandt, she noted, was the inspiration for the shading of light and dark. Using drypoint she hatches over the surface, creating a black background and then burnishes out the light in the fashion of a mezzotint. This technique can be found in her portraits and in her series of shell prints in which she relates images of natural objects to our bodies. Her current work concentrates on childhood and personal memories as well as portraits of the "forgotten" women of history whom she is reinterpreting.

In contrast to the black and white imagery of Ms. Fox, the evenings' last presenter, Masaaki Noda, portrayed himself primarily as a colorist using traditional stencil silk screen technique. Studying in Japan and beginning his career there, Mr. Noda's abstract silk screen prints were hard edged, using photo technique, systematic and mathematical images and strong plastic inks. Mr. Noda

explained that he did not feel comfortable working in Japan as a colorist since works of art using color are not considered as "spiritual" as work in black and white. Leaving Japan in 1977 for the United States, Mr. Noda sought new styles and techniques and above all, a greater use of color. In Japan he used 20 colors. In his American prints he uses 30 to 40 colors. He also uses oil based paint and rice paper which allows for more subtle and colorful prints and a softer edge abstract style. His most recent work concentrates on creating symbols of movement, particularly wings, through more dimensional and directed images.

At the end of the presentation, Club members had the opportunity to discuss their works with the artists, all of whom had brought extensive portfolios for viewing. For those members who were not able to attend the viewing, we are printing below a list of the artists' addresses and telephone numbers. We wish to thank the Events Committee headed by Dr. Muriel Moss for the time and effort which they expended in making this outstanding event a success.

Artists Participating in the Fifth Annual Showcase

Gary Jurysta
501 West 57th St.
New York, NY 10019
212-582-0889

James Pernotto
517 East 5th St., Apt. 200
New York, NY 10009
212-673-1963

Merle Perlmutter
20 Cherry St.
New Rochelle, NY 10801
914-633-6763

Carson Fox
945 Berkeley Ave
Trenton, NJ
609-989-0015

Masaaki Noda
393 West Broadway
Apt. #5 WM
New York, NY 10012
212-431-5146

The Many Faces of Chuck Close

Mona Rubin

A large body of Chuck Close's prints were recently on view at the Museum of Modern Art as part of a retrospective of the artist's work. Close's unique approach to portraiture makes a similar statement in both his prints and paintings. Although he is most widely recognized as a painter, the technique and visual results in both media share many elements. These portraits, based on the minute details of a preliminary photograph, become contemporary icons rather than images of specific people as one might expect.

Close works on a large scale. In referring to this format he says, "The bigger the art, the harder it is to ignore. I want to force the viewer to look at bits and pieces of information and make a whole out of these pieces." The tiny

pieces are created through a series of steps. In his paintings Close begins with a photograph, using a 20x24" polaroid camera. After the image is chosen, he marks it with a grid which corresponds to a larger grid on a canvas. He works systematically with 2" squares in horizontal clusters of four units. This transference of bits of information from one format to another evokes the impersonal nature of billboard painting or computerized images and may be what ultimately creates the feeling of alienation one senses in the heads. In more recent work, these small grids have become more abstract in nature. The pointillist approach results in tiny abstractions when viewed up close and detailed faces when viewed from a distance. Paradoxically this micro-macrocosmic view of the world works well on both levels.

In looking specifically at Chuck Close as a printmaker, many similarities to his painting are evident. The photo-

graph remains the basis of his final work. Most print makers who employ photography to achieve realistic imagery use lithography or screen prints. Close is one of the few who works with intaglio plates. As in his painting, he uses a large scale collage of photographic enlargements. He uses the grid to transfer the image, but in this case it is accomplished by the artist himself through hand-scraping and burnishing onto the copper plate. As in his paintings, the photograph is a building block of the print but not used as an actual reproduction. Close is able to create

remarkable large scale mezzotints.

Close works in many media. In addition to painting and print making, he also uses water-color, pastels, drawing and photography. No matter which media is employed, one senses an aloofness in the sitter. A recent New York Times article compares Close's work to the mathematics of image compression. After viewing these works one is left with the impression that not only are the pieces aesthetically pleasing, but that they provide much room for contemplation.

Books on Prints: A Selective Bibliography

Many of our members have expressed a desire for information on significant books dealing with prints. In response to these requests, the Publications Committee has put together a short list of recommended books. This list is neither definitive nor exhaustive and represents the personal reading and study of those who have suggested the following items. We wish to thank Roslyn Willett, Matthew Collins, Dr. Julian and Elaine Hyman and Geri Mickenberg for their contributions. We would like to make this an on-going feature in the Newsletter and we urge all members to let us know which books they have found particularly valuable as print collectors. All we need is the name of the book, author, publisher and date as well as a few lines of description. We hope to hear from many of you. Please share your knowledge and enthusiasm with other Print Club members. Send your suggestions to Arlyne Lesser, 119 Buckingham Road, Tenafly, NJ 07670 or call 201-567-0170 for further information.

The following general works are considered standards

Fritz Eichenberg. *The Art of the Print*. Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1976.

Written by a master woodcut artist, this is a wonderfully readable and profusely illustrated historical survey with a great index, glossary, bibliography and notes on technique. A recommended "best" book for anyone interested in the history and art of the print.

William M. Ivins, Jr. *How Prints Look: Photographs with Commentary*. Beacon Press, Boston, MA, revised and expanded by Marjorie B. Cohen, 1987.

William M. Ivins Jr. was curator of prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York from 1916 to 1946. The original edition of this book was published in 1943. The book is a classic introduction to the recognition and technical study of prints and is still used as a standard text on the subject.

A. Hyatt Mayor. *Prints & People: A Social History of Printed Pictures*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980, originally published in 1971 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

A Hyatt Mayor was Curator of the Department of Prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art following William Ivins Jr. He emphasizes the social context of the printmakers he discusses. Mr. Mayor evaluates more than

700 prints as works of art, pointing out their relationship with literature, commerce, science, fashion, religion and politics. Mr. Mayor was a witty and elegant lecturer and his writing conveys the charm and brilliance of the man.

Technical and historical treatment of printmaking processes

Bamber Gascoigne. *How to Identify Prints: A Complete Guide to Manual and Mechanical Processes from Woodcut to Ink Jet*. Thames & Hudson, New York, 1986, reprinted 1995.

A comprehensive guide to accurately identifying the many types of prints. The book contains hundreds of illustrations showing detailed features of the various printing methods, as well as a glossary for a consistent use of printing terms. A "Sherlock Holmes approach" guide to identifying a particular printing type provides a cross reference to relevant sections of the text and illustrations. An indispensable reference work.

Arthur M. Hind. *A History of Etching and Engraving*. Dover Publishers, New York, 1963.

A comprehensive survey of engraving and etching with an emphasis on the early centuries. The book is a standard work, providing an index of more than 2500 artists with brief biographical data and illustrations. Arthur Hind was Keeper of the Prints and Drawings at the British Museum and Professor of Fine Art at Oxford.

Arthur M. Hind. *An Introduction to a History of Woodcut*. 2 vols. Dover Publishers, New York, 1963.

The standard survey of the subject. Through illustrations the author covers the origin and early development of woodcuts and wood engravings.

Domenic Porzio, General Editor. *Lithography: 200 Years of Art, History and Technique*. Harry N. Abrams, Inc. New York, 1983.

A collection of essays on lithography, its invention and evolution and use as a tool for social comment and criticism. Includes "The Discovery of the Lithographic Stone," by the inventor of lithography, Aloys Senefelder (1771-1834).

Carol Wax. *The Mezzotint: History and Technique*. Harry N. Abrams Inc. New York, 1990.

The first comprehensive, illustrated history of the mezzotint.