

The Print Club of New York^{Inc}

Winter 1999

President's Greeting

Julian Hyman

The Print Club of New York is now in its eighth year of operation, having been founded in 1991. We have continued to maintain an exceptionally high quality annual presentation print. Our goal is to continue to do so and at the same level. Each year our print has been accepted by the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum. Through the generosity of several of our members, the print has also been donated to a number of other prestigious museums. The programs have maintained their high quality over a number of years, and they have been presented for the enlightenment and enjoyment of our membership. These events have included meetings at museums, galleries and libraries. We have been privileged to hear presentations and discussions by outstanding experts in the print field. The Newsletter has provided much information about many aspects of the print world.

I am grateful to the fine group of people responsible for these many achievements. They include members of the Board of Trustees, chairpersons of the four major committees and hardworking Print Club members. I also wish to welcome Malka Moscona who has become a member of our Board.

Our revised by-laws provide for an annual election of Board members and officers, and it is my hope that other interested members of the Club will step forward to take a role in continuing its excellence. Please call 212-479-7915 and express your interest in joining one of our Committees responsible for Membership, Print Selection, Events and the Newsletter. We also would appreciate feedback and suggestion on our activities. We welcome all of our membership to more active roles in the Club and hope to hear from many of you in the near future.

The Print Club of New York, Inc.

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A Brief History of the Print Club of New York

The Print Club of New York started in 1990 when Morley Melden, its first president, began exploring the possibilities of forming a Print Club for collectors in Metropolitan New York. Surprisingly, given the number of print collectors and the contact with major dealers, museums, Print Fairs and other print shows, there was no group or institution similar to the Print Clubs in Washington, D.C., Cleveland and Albany dedicated to meeting and sharing their collecting expertise.

With the assistance of Sylvie Gallagher, Hilda Castellon and Jean Melden, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to reach interested print collectors. Those collectors who expressed an interest in helping the Club become organized, were invited to a preliminary meeting, a large Founding Committee was formed and the Print Club of New York, with the legal assistance of founding members Michael Dym and Spencer Waller, was established as a not-for-profit organization. Norman Brock took on the responsibility of our finances and has served as Treasurer since the formation of the Club.

A newly formed Board of Trustees began holding monthly meetings. Sylvie Gallagher, a founding member, recalls those meetings held in the living room and on the staircase of her brownstone in Brooklyn Heights. Later through the assistance of Martin Seham, meetings were held in his law offices.

From the beginning it was the intention of the founding members to sponsor an annual Presentation Print, an original work, commissioned from an artist for distribution to the membership. The first Presentation Print, published in 1992 and limited to 150 members was "Passages," a mezzotint of a New York street at night by the artist Frederick Mershimer. Also, immediately upon formation of the Club, the Board also energetically developed a number of varied programs at museums, galleries and print workshops. These meetings remain an integral part of the Club's activities.

After the success of the Mershimer print, the Board decided to to accommodate the many disappointed print collectors who had requested membership by increasing the number of members to 200. Karl Schrag's color lithograph, "My Room-Bright Night," was the presentation print for 1993. By 1994 when Alex Katz's color woodcut "Jessica" was announced, a waiting list of potential members had to be created. April Gornick's landscape print "Loire," an intaglio on copper plate, was presented to members in the Fall of 1995. Continuing the tradition of including varied styles and media, Presentation Prints chosen by the Print Selection Committee have included Richard Bosman's color woodcut, "Brooklyn Bridge" in 1996; Stanley Boxer's abstract color etching with aquatint, "Berkshire Glory" in 1997, and Will Barnet's black and white lithograph, "Between Life and Life" in 1998.

A major commitment of the Club since its founding

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has been to further education and shared expertise in collecting. A questionnaire developed by Glen Nelson in 1997 provided the Board of Trustees with valuable insights into the collecting interests of Club members as well as suggestions in regard to its activities. Membership meetings have covered a variety of subjects among them, Old Master prints, poster art, Japanese woodcuts, Cuban art, conservation and preservation of prints, meetings and lectures at galleries, museums and libraries, visits to artists studios and print workshops. The Club's meetings are always well attended and reflect the wide variety of interests among Club members. Two membership meetings have become annual events and highlights of the Club's activities. These are the introduction of the Presentation Print by the artist to Club members and the Artist's Showcase which provides a group of artists with an opportunity to show and discuss their work with Club members, many of whom have used the opportunity to

add prints to their collection.

Along with the Presentation Print and the educational activities, the Club soon added a Newsletter for members. From its inception by Morley and Jean Melden and Glen Nelson, the Newsletter has drawn on the expertise of members for its articles. Among these have been thoughtful reviews of individual artist's works, gallery and museum shows and introductions to new areas of collecting. Currently the Newsletter has expanded its format to include interviews with artists, book reviews and membership notes.

The Club's by-laws were revised in 1998 and now specify an Annual Membership Meeting to elect new officers and members of the Board of Trustees. The 1998 meeting allowed members to meet the slate of officers and Board members as well as to get acquainted with fellow members at the cocktail party which preceded the meeting. This year's Annual Membership Meeting and cocktail party will take place on June 1 at the Liederkrantz Club, 6 East 87th Street.

As 1999 begins, the Club continues to draw on the expertise and commitment of the Board of Trustees, several of whom have served from the inception of the Club, as well as its general membership. At present a few memberships are still available to qualified individuals who share the Club's commitment to education and collecting. Information on these remaining memberships can be obtained from Membership Chairman, Marvin Bolotsky at 914-472-6858.

Upcoming Print Club Events

Thursday, March 25, 7:30 p.m.

Michelle Lapine, curatorial assistant, The Jewish Museum, will speak on "Print Making and the Hebrew Bible," a discussion of the influence of the Hebrew Bible on Dutch printmakers. The meeting will be held at the Liederkrantz Club, 6 East 87th St.

Thursday, April 15, 6:00 p.m.

Jeffrey Reusch will speak on "Prints of the 1960's and 70's" at the Jeffrey Reusch Gallery, 134 Spring St. Mr. Reusch lectures at New York University and is a specialist in the print artists of this period.

Thursday, May 20, 6:00 p.m.

Jean Yves Noblet will speak on "New Printing Techniques" including computer generated prints and technical innovations in lithography. The meeting will be held at Karen McCready Fine Art gallery, 425 West 13th Street, 5th floor (between 9th Ave. and Washington St.)

Tuesday, June 1, 6:00 p.m. Cocktail party; 7:00 p.m., Annual Membership Meeting

The Liederkrantz Club, 6 East 87th St. Members are invited to attend the cocktail party and to vote on the Print Club slate of officers and members of the Board of Trustees.

Tuesday, October 5, 7:30 p.m.

Artist's talk and viewing of the 1999 Presentation Print. Liederkrantz Club, 6 East 87th St.

Wednesday, October 20, 6 p.m.

Fifth Annual Artist's Showcase, The National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South.

Other Events of Interest to Print Club Members

"Treasures Revealed: 19th and 20th Century American Works on Paper," January 9-March 7, the National Academy, New York. The Academy's collection, in formation since 1826, is largely the result of contributions by artist members of which 300 have been printmakers.

"Graphics! British Prints Now," April 9-June 6, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven. The exhibition surveys the renaissance of graphic art in Britain over the past five years.

"Lucien Freud Etchings from the Paine Webber Art Collection, Jan.23-March 21, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven. A special exhibition of 42 etchings.

"Jasper Johns: Process & Printmaking," January 23-April 4, Philadelphia Museum of Art. This exhibition presents 125 proofs and edition prints drawn almost entirely from the artist's personal collection. The exhibition was organized by The Museum of Modern Art.

John Sloan: The Art of the Printmaker, April 29-June 5," Kraushaar Galleries, Inc., NY. A selection of over 50 examples of Sloan's print work.

"Marsden Hartley: The Berlin Prints," February 11-April 9. Babcock Galleries, NY.

"Order and Disorder: Architectural Transitions in Prints and Photographs," January 30-April 3, New York Public Library. An exhibition examining the construction and demolition of man-made structures.

An Interview With Riva Helfond

Peter Heller

Riva Helfond, born in 1910, has been a painter/printmaker for the last 60 years. She has won numerous honors and awards, and her work is represented in permanent collections including the Library of Congress, MOMA, and the Newark Museum of Fine Arts. Ms. Helfond has taught printmaking at New York University and Union College, Cranford, NJ. She has participated in single and group exhibitions throughout the United States and abroad.

Ms. Helfond's prints of the 1930's are representative of her social concerns, particularly of the time she spent around the coal fields of Lansford, PA. These prints embody intimate aspects of the miners' existence. Ms. Helfond was also a member of the WPA art project and taught painting and printmaking in Harlem. Her later works show her response to World War II and her interest in mechanical and construction processes. Although Ms. Helfond began her career as a realist, her later work also shows her interest in abstraction and in innovative printing techniques emphasizing different tactile levels.

In a recent interview Ms. Helfond provided some details about her long and varied career as an artist.

Peter: Riva, tell me about your beginnings.

Riva: I was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1910. My parents took me back to Russia when I was four. My father was killed there during the First World War. In 1921 we left Russia for Krakow, Poland. We got our passports and arrived back in the USA in 1922.

I spoke no English and was placed in the fourth grade. I graduated within two years and went on to Washington Irving High School.

I always drew, and my mother thought that maybe I could make a living from this. She was a widow and worked, and I could not afford college. Luckily, I always had scholarships and did not have to pay for my schooling.

In my early art experiences, I took up fashion design. I remember how, one day in high school, I passed the Life Class and looked in. I just froze. The instructor came over to me and said, "You look like you're in a trance."

I told him that I hated fashion, and I would rather do this, so I changed classes. I even posed for him in his private studio. I didn't tell my mother, and one day she discovered these nude drawings of men and women in my room, and that was the end of it!

Later I went to the School of Industrial Arts on East 42nd St. and studied with Carl Link who was my drawing teacher. I soon had enough of that and transferred to the Art Students League where I studied with [William] Von Schlegel. He was an impressionist and taught me how to paint. I also studied with [Yasuo] Kuniyoshi, but we did not get along. He was a womanizer, and he wasn't my type.

Finally, I discovered Harry Sternberg. He was a challenge and influenced me to become a printmaker.

While studying printmaking with Harry Sternberg at the League, I became involved in the WPA Teaching Division for several years. I was earning \$21 a week. We were a very unified group, like a family. We lived in the same area and met every week to collect our pay. We all

belonged to the Artist Congress and the Artist Union.

One day I got a call from the head of our division, telling me that they needed a print instructor for the Harlem Art Center. The year was 1936/37, and Augusta Savage was the Center's director. I had never before been exposed to the Black community, and I told Miss Savage that I was a novice printmaker. She said that we would all learn together.

That experience became a big catalyst in my life. I did not know what to expect. Jacob Lawrence and Norman Lewis were on staff. Ernest Crichlow, Ronald Joseph and a number of younger artists like Bob Blackburn joined us. Bob, who's about thirteen years my junior had just come from high school.

Some friends used to ask me, "What is a Jewish girl like you doing in Harlem?" I became emotionally connected to this community. To this day, it's like meeting my family.

I really learned how to print by teaching there, and having this exposure to the Black world changed me as a person. I became more aware of human suffering. I started working in black and white and involved myself with themes of protest.

Peter: Who really influenced you?

Riva: Harry Sternberg did to some degree, and there was a lot of self exploration. I just let things happen and much of my successful work is not formula.

I've also been influenced by Cubism and French Impressionism. This comes through in my choice of colors.

Peter: Do you end up making a print from your oil work?

Riva: The two are really separate. Printmaking is much more of a manual undertaking, while oil painting is a more spontaneous experience. I reach for a brush as you might reach for a typewriter. After 60 years, painting has become a language for me.

Peter: Do you work from sketches before you plan a print?

Riva: I take photographs and I do a lot of drawings. I might do the same subject in etching, silk screen or painting. I often go back to a subject or theme that I like.

Peter: Where might all this take you?

Riva: I'm painting or printing the way I feel about the subject. I am not painting "it." For me it is an emotional reaction.

Peter: You often sketched miners in their homes, didn't you?

Riva: After I met my husband Bill [Barrett], I started visiting the mining communities in Eastern Pennsylvania where he grew up. The bigotry against Jews was something. While I was having drinks in the local bar with some of the women, they started to talk negatively about Jews. When I told them that I was Jewish, I was never invited back to drink with them.

My husband was from Lansford, PA. When he told his mother that he had married a Jewish girl, she said, "I did not ask you what religion she belonged to."

In 1985 I had a show at Union County College where I teach. A woman was standing in front of a color print of a miner's shack, and she was weeping. I asked her why she

was crying, and she told me that she came from Lansford, and this is how it looked. She asked me, "How did you catch it so well?" My miner exposure was quite raw compared to my work on the WPA Project.

Peter: Do you stay in touch with any of the old-timers?

Riva: Yes, with Harry Sternberg, Will Barnet, Sylvan Cole and Adele Lozowick.

We knew Lou and Adele Lozowick in New York City. I remember when Lou's prints were selling for \$10-15. I had them in our shop in Plainfield [NJ]. We had opened up a gallery/art supplies store [in the 1950's]. Lozowick came to us because he wanted to learn framing.

Peter: You told me that you traveled a great deal. How did it affect your work?

Riva: I traveled to Greece and ended up spending four

months in Athens, and then I went to Egypt. I went "nuts" over the murals, the mosaics and the sculpture. They took my breath away, and I remember having spiritual experiences there. The forms were so simple and breath taking. I felt connected to the raw and primitive art—the people's art.

Peter: In closing, tell me what your plans are for today and the future.

Riva: I am still teaching painting, drawing and art history at Union Community College [in Cranford, NJ], and I enjoy the contact with the students. I am still learning from them at age 88.

Note: Ms. Helfond's most recent exhibition, February 1999, was held at the Tomasulo Gallery, Union County College, Cranford, NJ.

How Prints are Numbered

Dan Redmon

Many people are puzzled by the numbering process of a print edition. They wonder whether their print, numbered 199, is as good as the print with a lower edition number, particularly if the edition is a large one. However, collectors should not worry whether their edition number is in the low numbers or among the last of the edition. Number 199 from an edition of 200 could easily have been the very first print pulled from the press.

Once a print has been pulled from the press it will have ink or some kind of pigment on it, and the individual sheets of paper will dry at different speeds. As they come off the press, the printer or assistant will spread the wet paper—in no particular arrangement—over any practical space for drying. It may also take days or weeks for a large

edition to actually be pulled from the press or presses.

After the prints are dried and stacked, it is not a general practice of the artist or printer to number the prints in the sequence in which they were pulled from the press. Remember, when they are drying the prints would be spread all over a studio, and normally all the prints pulled after proofing would be considered of equal clarity.

Of course artists will always sign their own names on all the prints in the edition, but for many different reasons an artist may have the printer or assistant do the actual numbering on the paper.

Even though there are exceptions, this procedure for numbering prints is the normal practice and will likely remain the standard procedure, particularly in editions of a hundred or more. If the artist thought that the first prints pulled were better, they would probably be priced higher. But this is generally not the case.

Members Enjoy Art Walk to Three Chelsea Galleries

The Artwalk to three Chelsea galleries on November 19 was an exciting new event for Print Club members. The Karen McCready Fine Art, Long Fine Art and Jim Kempner Fine Art galleries graciously invited us to visit, partake of refreshments and share their knowledge and collections with us. Karen McCready's exhibit included the works of Jim Dine, Sol LeWitt, Wayne Thibaud, Helen Frankenthaler, Robert Colescott, and April Gornick. Jean-Yves Nablet, master printer for Nablet Seraphic Inc. explained how he worked with Robert Rauchenberg to achieve what the artist wanted to express. He also discussed the digital printing process which is moving fine prints into the twenty-first century. Much discussion ensued about how an artist strikes the plate when the plate is actually on a disk.

Speaking about his move from 57th St., Stephen Long of Long Fine Art, 427 West 14th St. commented on the

shifting geography of the New York art scene. Among the works on display which we discussed were those by Jules Olitski, Sam Francis and Adolph Gottlieb as well as floor paintings by Neil Marshall.

The last stop of the evening was at Jim Kempner Fine Art, 501 West 23rd St. Jim Kempner explained the involvement of the artist, Howard Hodgkin, in every print that was on exhibit. Each print had been modified by Hodgkin's hand painted additions; yet the artist numbered and considered them as part of the same series. Mr. Kempner also discussed how Mr. Hodgkins overcame the difficulties of working in aquatint and carborundum to achieve these images.

The success of this Art Walk encourages the Events Committee to plan more such events. Dr. Muriel Moss, Events Chair would appreciate suggestions for future meetings from all Club members.

Members View the Centennial Portfolio of the American Academy of Arts and Letters

Members of the Print Club and their guests on December 7 were invited by the American Academy of Arts and Letters to visit their beautiful building on West 155th Street. They were given a tour of the Academy's wonderful collection of paintings, photographs, memorabilia and objects of art. They also were given the opportunity to preview the Academy's Centennial Portfolio, a project chaired and coordinated by Will Barnet. Mr. Barnet enlisted 50 notable American printmakers, artists and architects who each contributed a print to the project. The Portfolio consists of two volumes, each containing 25 prints in a limited edition of 50. It was created by Academy members in

celebration of the Centennial of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1898-1998, and took almost five years to complete.

Among the artists represented were Jasper Johns, Chuck Close, William Bailey, Frank Gehry, Philip Pearlstein, George Segal, Larry Rivers, Paul Cadmus, Marisol, Roy Lichtenstein, Jacob Lawrence, and James Rosenquist. A complete list of the 50 artists and the Portfolios are available at the Pace Gallery.

We wish to thank the Academy and its Director Virginia DeJani for giving us the opportunity to preview this exciting project which contains the work of some of America's finest artists.

New York Public Library's Spencer Collection

On February 17, Robert Rainwater, Assistant Director of the New York Public Library's Art, Prints and Photographs Division and Curator of the Spencer Collection introduced a large turnout of Club members to the rare and beautiful Western and Asian illustrated books, manuscripts and scrolls which make up the Library's Spencer Collection. To illustrate his talk, Mr. Rainwater with the assistance of Margaret Glover and Elizabeth Wycoff of the Print Room Staff laid out a large selection of works representing holdings in the Collection. Mr. Rainwater described the Collection as the Library's first special collection, a bequest from William Augustus Spencer who died in the 1911 Titanic disaster. In addition to his bequest of 232 illustrated books bound by the leading art binders of his day, Mr. Spencer also left his estate to the Library for the future purchase of fine and rare illustrated books and manuscripts. The Collection now numbers 10,000 and includes Medieval and Renaissance illustrated manuscripts, examples of Western book illustration from the sixteenth to the twentieth century and Asian manuscripts, scrolls and printed books.

Mr. Rainwater began his talk by displaying representative examples of books in Mr. Spencer's collection, mainly French contemporary works in fine bindings which in themselves are works of art. Mr. Rainwater explained that this interest in fine binding was an integral part of book collecting at the end of the 19th century and is again finding favor among collectors of contemporary hand made books. Of particular interest to members were the beautiful Art Nouveau style illustrations in the nature inspired bindings of Marius Michel, Emile-Phillipe Mercier and Charles Meunier. The Collection has continued to purchase important examples of illustrated works in fine bindings. A particularly beautiful example was a 1965 binding by Pierre-Lucien Martin of Paul Valery's 1953 translation of Virgil's *Bucolics* with lithographs by Jacques Villon.

Mr. Rainwater then emphasized the evolution of the Collection's acquisitions. In the early days of the Collection, during the 1920's, rare and important works illustrating the history of typography and book illustration

were acquired. Among those on display were a 1477 book containing the first engravings ever made for a book with text; a beautifully hand colored 1482 Ptolemy *Cosmographia* containing 32 double page woodcuts comprising a map of the world as geographers knew it; and a classic of the Italian printed book by Aldus Manutius printed in 1499 which is notable for its revolutionary use of variable typography and different type faces. Mr. Rainwater also drew members attention to another strength of the Collection, its Festival books celebrating major events made in Europe from the 16th to the 19th century. On display was the rarest of these Festival books of which only two copies remain, a series of fold out etchings of the Grand Canal in Venice, on 16 plates, made in 1686.

In the 1930's the Collection began acquiring Asian, particularly Japanese manuscripts, printed books and scrolls. These acquisitions continued after the War, and Mr. Rainwater displayed representative copies of rare Asian scrolls. Among them a 17th century scroll illustrating a scene from *Tales of the Genji* elicited appreciative comments from members because of the beauty of its pristine condition. Mr. Rainwater also showed representative Japanese printed books in the Collection and an early to mid 18th century Thai manuscript in a palm leaf format reminiscent of the original palm leaves on which such manuscripts were printed. The Collection's Thai manuscripts are particularly important because so few such works have survived.

Moving to the present, Mr. Rainwater stressed that the Collection continues to acquire contemporary illustrated works. On display were representative artists books such as the first copy of a limited edition of William Wegman's *Field Guide to North American and Other Regions* a whimsical book made completely by hand. Other contemporary works on display made it clear that the age old art of the illustrated book, many using innovative techniques in illustration, typography, paper and binding is still being practiced by contemporary book artists.

Club members thoroughly enjoyed this introduction to the wonderful holdings in the renowned Spencer

Collection, and they were fortunate in being able to view these highlights of the Collection and to discuss them with its distinguished Curator. We wish to thank Mr. Rainwater for his informative survey of the Collection's

holdings and his graciousness in allowing us to view them. We also wish to thank Board member Harriet Burdock, who is on the Art and Architecture Staff at the New York Public Library, for arranging this event.

Membership News and Notes

This past January Dr. Julian Hyman, Print Club president, showed his "Photographs of Children Around the World" at the Teaneck, New Jersey Library. The exhibit included pictures of children taken in Korea, China, Japan, India, Hungary, France and the United States. Dr. Hyman has exhibited at the Brenner Fine Arts Gallery and the Caravan House Galleries in New York as well as participating in a number of group exhibitions.

The Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University has received more than 100 contemporary prints from William and Jan van Straaten, founders of Riverhouse Editions, publishers of fine art prints. The prints are a unique collection of etchings by artists who have worked at Riverhouse since 1992. Print Club member David Mickenberg is director of the Block Museum.

Print Club member Harvey Isbits has donated his collection of over 200 Winslow Homer wood engravings which he has collected since 1975 to the Brooklyn Museum. The prints which picture life in America in the 19th century will be on exhibit at the Museum from July 1 through October 10.

Print Club members Sylvan Cole, of the Sylvan Cole

Gallery, Elaine and Julian Hyman, Robert Newman of the Old Print Shop, and Reba and Dave Williams have donated prints to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, England. These prints will be exhibited at the Museum under the title, "Recent Acquisitions of American Prints," February 9-May 3. A print by Richard Bosman, the Print Club's Presentation Print artist for 1996 is featured on the cover of the Exhibition catalog.

An exhibit of the photographs of Wilbur H. Porterfield has been curated by Print Club member Gillian Hannum. The show, entitled "Shadows and Reflections: Pictorial Photography by Wilbur H. Porterfield," can be seen at the Palmer Museum of Art, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, from January 17 to May 30. The exhibition will then travel to the Burchfield-Penney Art Center, Buffalo State College, October 16 - January 17.

Note: Members are invited to call or write to us if they have news they wish to share. Call (201) 567-0170 or write to Editor, The Print Club of New York, Inc., 119 Buckingham Road, Tenafly, NJ 07670.

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