

Crown Point Press

PRESS RELEASE

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Crown Point Press in the '80s

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In 2020, as Crown Point Press moves into its fifty-eighth year, the first exhibition in our gallery looks back to the 1980s. In the '80s women had big hair and shoulder pads. John Lennon was shot; the Iran-Iraq war began; the fax machine, Pac Man, and domestic camcorders appeared. Ronald Reagan, a Republican, replaced Jimmy Carter, a Democrat, as President. The economic unrest of the 1970s had gradually shifted toward an era of extravagance. In the '80s, many artists worked in large-scale. Painting was influenced by advertising and entertainment.

In January, 1980, Crown Point Press began the decade by sponsoring an artists' conference on the South Pacific island of Ponape. The trip resulted in a boxed set of phonograph records of artists' talks that, in general, make the point that art is connected to the social and cultural climate of its time.

The main focus of Crown Point Press is etching. Kathan Brown, who founded the press in 1962, said at the time that she worried that this historic, time-consuming method of printing was at risk of being abandoned.

Now, in 2020, Crown Point Press brings three or four artists each year from varied points around the world to San Francisco to develop their own etchings. Each artist spends about two weeks creating images on copper plates, working with technical help from printers who later print the finished works in small editions. During the 1980s, Crown Point Press published etching projects with 49 artists, and it continues to do artist projects that it publishes, and also offers workshops available to anyone who wishes to join.

In 1981, Crown Point extended its focus to the Japanese *ukiyo-e* method of woodcut printing, which (unlike etching) involves using watercolor inks. Crown Point's relationship with printer Tadashi Toda in Kyoto kept its Japanese program going for almost a decade. About a dozen artists (including Francesco Clemente, Helen Frankenthaler, and William T. Wiley) made two-week trips to Japan to work with Toda after having sent ahead images to be carved into woodblocks.

The Japanese approach to woodblock printing is based on an earlier Chinese approach, which is more complex. In China, each image is printed from dozens of blocks in assorted sizes. No material is wasted; each block is the smallest irregular size possible for the particular lines and tones it contains. Crown Point began taking artists to China to make watercolor woodcuts in 1987 and continued through 1989 when a major earthquake hit its San Francisco home base, providing a dramatic finale to our programs in China and in Japan. The Press, itself, continues with its original emphasis on etching, as you can plainly see if you follow us on our websites and/or visit our gallery in San Francisco.

This current exhibition includes etchings made at Crown Point in the '80 and also woodcuts from both our Japan and China programs. The artists are: Vito Acconci, Robert Bechtle, John Cage, Francesco Clemente, Tony Cragg, Elaine de Kooning, Richard Diebenkorn, Eric Fischl, Joel Fisher, Helen Frankenthaler, Hamish Fulton, April Gornik, Hans Haacke, Al Held, Robert Hudson, Bryan Hunt, Shoichi Ida, Joan Jonas, Anish Kapoor, Alex Katz, Joyce Kozloff, Robert Kushner, Sherrie Levine, Sol LeWitt, Tom Marioni, Robert Moskowitz, Judy Pfaff, Janis Provisor, Rammellzee, Ed Ruscha, David Salle, Italo Scanga, José Maria Sicilia, Richard Smith, Pat Steir, Wayne Thiebaud, David True, and William T. Wiley.

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