

Overview

October, 1990

Dear Friends,

I have dated this letter about the time I expect you to be reading it, October, 1990, the time of the opening celebration of Crown Point Press' new building at 657 Howard Street in San Francisco.

This building represents a giant step for Crown Point Press, a step we have taken out of adversity and over obstacles. It would not have been possible if it were not for the goodwill and generous spirit of our artists, clients, and friends. After the earthquake demolished our Folsom Street space, people gave us help in many ways; I wish to say in the most heartfelt way possible—thank you, each of you, for your concern, for your connection with us.

657 Howard Street was a beauty back in 1922 when it was built for the San Francisco Newspaper Company, and—thanks to our architect, Denise Hall—it is a beauty again! We have almost 40,000 square feet, three floors. The basement is given over to storage, print drying, and a staff lunchroom. The ground floor houses the gallery, which includes a bookstore with books and catalogs about printmaking and about our artists. Most of our offices and the shipping department are also on the ground floor. The studios run across the back and the front of the top floor, with an editing room in the center; a few offices (including mine) and a library are also upstairs. We have more than double the studio space we had in Folsom Street, and we are set up so it is possible for two artists to be here at the same time, working in completely separate studios. The studios continue to be devoted entirely to etching.

Crown Point Press was founded in 1962, and for twenty years we worked only in etching—I think now we are possibly the best etching workshop in the world. We are also, presently, the only contemporary print publisher regularly working with woodblock printers in the Orient; we've been doing projects in Japan since 1982 and in China since 1988. Briefly, the way we work is to invite artists to come to San Francisco to make etchings or to travel with us to Japan or China to make woodblock prints. After the prints are completed, we show them and sell them in our galleries in New York City and San Francisco. We release more editions each year than any other contemporary print publisher.

The paragraph above gives you the bare bones of who we are. But it's really more complicated than that, because who we are, *finally*, is who our artists are. In the long run, what's going to last (and make a difference in the world) is the art—and the art comes from the artists.

In that regard, take a look at the opening exhibition in our new building. We have called it *Post Earthquake Prints* and have included only

work published by us in the past year. The list is something like what might be a normal year's work for us, particularly in the range of artists. Because of the emergency in San Francisco, we did more woodblock prints than usual this year and fewer etchings, but the number of projects ended up to be about what we usually do (approximately 20).

At the time of the earthquake, **William T. Wiley's** work was on exhibition in our San Francisco gallery on Folsom Street. Wiley lives in the San Francisco Bay Area and works frequently at Crown Point Press. He was a leader of the "funk art" movement of the 1960s. His work, which incorporates Zen-like writings, concerns about the environment, and detailed "picture-making" drawing is a kind of "wizdumb bridge" from art to life.

On October 17, also, we had stacked up on a table on the floor below the gallery three entire editions of Wayne Thiebaud's etchings, waiting for the artist's signature. And also in the storage room were recently-made plates from two artists, John Cage and Shoichi Ida, plates not printed yet (the printing was subsequently done in our temporary studio). So we begin the exhibition with the work of Wiley, Thiebaud, Cage, and Ida.

Wayne Thiebaud lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is a realist and a formalist, and is also an influential teacher. His work is sometimes humorous, always gives the feeling that the artist has taken a fresh look, and is alert to the forms of objects or the forms in landscape. Thiebaud's work and his ideas indicate that he is aware of the continuity of the stream of art practice through the ages, a stream to which he has contributed for forty or so years.

John Cage, who is seventy-eight years old and whose ideas have penetrated widely into our culture, is a "man for all seasons," a composer of music, a poet, a conceptual artist. His etchings and drawings, which are visually delicate and complex, are approached philosophically; the artist has devised a system of chance operations which allows him to work without inserting ego into what he does. Cage lives in New York.

Shoichi Ida's work places traditional Japanese philosophy into a contemporary art context. He looks at the relationship of human beings to nature; an awareness of horizon, verticality, and gravity informs all his work. Ida began work as an artist in the late 1960s. He lives in Kyoto, Japan.

There is a fourth artist whose etchings in this show were made before the earthquake but published after it. **Sherrie Levine** worked in our

studio four years ago, but the etchings are only just now being released. She is a New York artist who is one of the inventors of "appropriation" art, a movement of the mid-1980s. She works with appropriated images from specific artists or from "generic" styles of the recent past.

Our woodblock printer in Kyoto, Tadashi Toda, produced the work of four of the artists in this exhibition: Francesco Clemente, José Maria Sicilia, David True, and Al Held.

Francesco Clemente, who is Italian but lives in New York and India, is one of the foremost "neo-expressionist" painters of the 1980s. His drawing is literal, his work simple, personal, often fragment-ed and floating lightly in space.

José Maria Sicilia is Spanish, but lives part of the year in Paris; he is an '80s artist, a painter who works abstractly, although sometimes with a figurative element that has symbolic value. His work is romantic, elegant, very much involved with tactility.

David True, a New York artist associated with "new image" painting of the late '70s, works fancifully with emblematic landscape images which spring from daydreams and visions.

Al Held, who lives in New York and has been an influential artist since the 1950s, makes work which is abstract and full of complex space built up using one and two point perspective.



Howard Street studio, San Francisco

In our China woodblock print program we have available several different printers, in different workshops, different towns, rather than only one printer as we do in Japan. Consequently, we were able to do six artist projects with a total of twelve images in China this year, and in addition we released *The Two Flames*, Francesco Clemente's small print which was the first thing we did in China, two years ago.

This year was unusual in that the first three artists who participated in the program, after Clemente, all sent additional work to China after they had traveled there. So the Chinese woodblock prints in this show by Robert Bechtle, Tom

(continued on page 6)

New Editions

Despite a rather disruptive post-earthquake year, Crown Point Press was able to produce several outstanding editions, some in a temporary studio, and the first two projects in our new studios at 657 Howard Street in San Francisco.

Richard Diebenkorn completed six new black and white etchings this spring that exemplify his mastery of intaglio. *Passage II* is an aquatint characterized by a scaffolding of white lines against a dark background. The largest of the group, *Passage I*, was created by using a reversal plate of *Passage II*. In it strong lines on a grey background are superposed by a blue band in which a palm tree form appears unexpectedly. *Ne comprends pas* and *Oui* are two smaller prints that were made using the same reversal method. Their lines describe forms that fit together like roughly-cut elements in a jigsaw puzzle. *Domino I* and *Domino II* are classic Diebenkorn images. *Domino I* is dominated by an arch within the rectangular picture plane. The arch is filled with an array of strong lines, smudges, circles, and accidental scratches that create effects of flickering light and subtle movement. Similarly, the composition of *Domino II* is defined by a network of lines and marks and also includes balloon-like shapes that relate to the club and spade imagery found in some of the artist's work of the 1980s.

Tim Rollins and five members of K.O.S. (Angel Abreu, George Garces, José Parissi, Annette Rosado, and Nelson Savinon) returned to Crown Point Press this summer and were the first to work in our new building. They continued their involvement with *The Temptation of Saint Antony* by Gustave Flaubert, building on the series of 14 etchings they created at Crown Point in the summer of 1989. This year they made a series of 20 mysterious abstract images, most employing soapground aquatint, titled *The Solitaries*. The images are printed in dark blue-back ink over a cropped section of the original French text describing the arrival of the "Solitaries," enemies of Saint Antony who take revenge "...on luxury; those who cannot read tear up books; others break or damage statues, paintings...."

In a second group of works, a hand-worked edition entitled *The Sun*, the background consists of a xeroxed book page from a German edition of *The Temptation* that tells of Saint Antony's meeting with the devil in the guise of death. A blood-red ring created with spitbite aquatint was printed over the text before the artists colored each page with a beef-blood and grain-alcohol mixture. In giving a sense of these works, Annette Rosado put it best when she wrote, "At first I thought the blood works were going to be shocking and horrible. But they have a kind of beauty, like the visions inside you painted in a material that is also inside you and other living creatures like you."

The largest work Rollins + K.O.S. made, *The Queen of Sheba*, differs markedly from their other works in the *Temptation* series in both scale and style. On a large single sheet of handmade Japanese paper, three superimposed softground plates created with strands of hair are printed in a midnight blue. The related text (describing the

attempted seduction of Saint Antony by the Queen) does not form the background for the imagery as the text does in almost all the works created by the group; it is printed instead beneath the image like a caption. Rollins has been collaborating with teenagers from the South Bronx for over eight years. What started out as an art class in the public schools has turned into an innovative art collective that challenges our notions of how art is made and who is qualified to make it.

Katsura Funakoshi, a sculptor living and working in Tokyo, came to Crown Point Press this summer to make his first works in intaglio. Funakoshi's figurative sculptures are carved from wood and most often depict the subject from the waist up. The subjects are on one hand naturalistically portrayed, wearing their street clothes, even at times bespectacled. The technique of woodcarving has a long history in Japan. Both Buddhist and Shinto temple and shrine dieties were often carved from wood. Funakoshi uses traditional materials and techniques but his figures are unmistakably contemporary in attitude. They derive much of their power from their eyes (inset painted marble orbs) which the artist feels are keys to psychological understanding. He wrote once that "...their gestures and their eyes somehow embody the humanity in all of us."

Funakoshi made eight black and white etchings, many of them employing soapground, during his residency. All depict figures, most from the waist-up, two portray just the head, and one etching comprises two representations of the full figure, side by side. In three instances, Funakoshi cut the copper around the outline of the figures so that the plate mark is coincident with the contour of the body, giving the figures the illusion of dimensionality. The eight works cover a range of approaches, some quite worked—as in *In the Room with High Ceiling*, in which the figure's black jacket is made to feel like velvet through the use of drypoint—others more linear and airy, such as the sparsely rendered head of a man in *Study*.

Funakoshi regularly makes drawings, either as finished works or as preliminary to his sculpture. He found the etching experience to be related to both the graphic qualities of drawing and the physical aspect of sculpture and has succeeded in investing his prints with the haunting quality that characterizes his three-dimensional work. Funakoshi was one of the three artists to represent Japan in the 1988 Venice Biennale and the 1989 Bienal de São Paulo. His work is included in *Against Nature*, an exhibition currently touring the United States. The exhibition, jointly organized by Japanese and American curators, features younger Japanese artists who work non-traditionally.

We are pleased to be able to release *Barcham Green*, a portfolio of five etchings by Sherrie Levine that the artist created in 1986. *No. 1*, an aquatint, portrays the olive-green silhouetted profile of Abraham Lincoln against a background of the pale terra-cotta handmade paper on which all the images in the series are printed. Two works appropriate imagery created by other artists: *No. 5*, an aquatint and photogravure,

replicates Walker Evans's famous Depression-era photograph of *Allie Mae Burroughs, Wife of a Sharecropper, No. 3* is a re-production in aquatint of the Russian Suprematist Kasimir Malevich's radically reductive painting *Suprematist Composition: White on White* of 1918. In annexing these images, each of which have achieved the status of cultural icons, Levine calls into question the commodification of the art object and the value of authorship.

Levine's aquatint *No. 2* is a bold arrangement of black and yellow-ochre vertical bands. It is not a direct quotation but a generic sign for stripe paintings of the type prevalent in the 1960s. Levine forces us to consider the criteria for judging such works. Levine's *No. 4*, photogravure and aquatint, is a minimal composition depicting a plain plank of plywood in which the knot holes are colored a greenish gold. As in *No. 2*, Levine does not appropriate another artist's work but rather, as in all the prints in the series, quotes from her own earlier work. In so doing, Levine takes the image one step further from the original. Visually these works are very handsome, even seductive. Levine, one of New York's leading post-modern "appropriation" artists, has always insisted—her radical stance notwithstanding—that she makes her work for the pleasure it gives her.

Two new releases by the Spanish artist José María Sicilia are woodblock prints made in Kyoto, Japan, in the fall of 1989. *Asebi* and *Shikibu* are named after Japanese flowers and complete a long series of paintings and works on paper by Sicilia that relate in a poetic sense to the idea of "flower." This series includes the eight etchings entitled *Fleur Rouge* published by Crown Point Press in 1988.

The two woodblocks are extraordinarily rich, each containing many layers of close-valued reds. Taking advantage of the Japanese woodblock's affinity to watercolor, Sicilia created irregular circular images formed by translucent washes that radiate out from the center of the page. In each of the images a slightly off-center white square provides a stable vortex. In *Asebi*, a yellow area that functions like the glow of the setting sun lies to the right of the white square, while the red field gradually fades to a red-orange stain at its borders. In the slightly darker *Shikibu*, crimson in combination with red-oranges spin in a circular path.

Constance Lewallen
Associate Director

Notes

The Temptation of Saint Antony I-IV by Tim Rollins + K.O.S. (published by Crown Point Press in 1989) was exhibited this summer, along with other works by the collaborative based on Flaubert's book, at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Basel, Switzerland.

On Saturday, October 20, from 1 to 6 p.m., we will inaugurate our new gallery and studios at 657 Howard St. in San Francisco with an exhibition of *Post Earthquake Prints*. We will also have etching demonstrations by our Crown Point printers; Japanese woodblock demonstrations by Tadashi Toda of Kyoto, Japan; and Chinese woodblock demonstrations by Hu Qinyun of the Duoyunxuan workshop in Shanghai, China. All are welcome to attend the celebration.



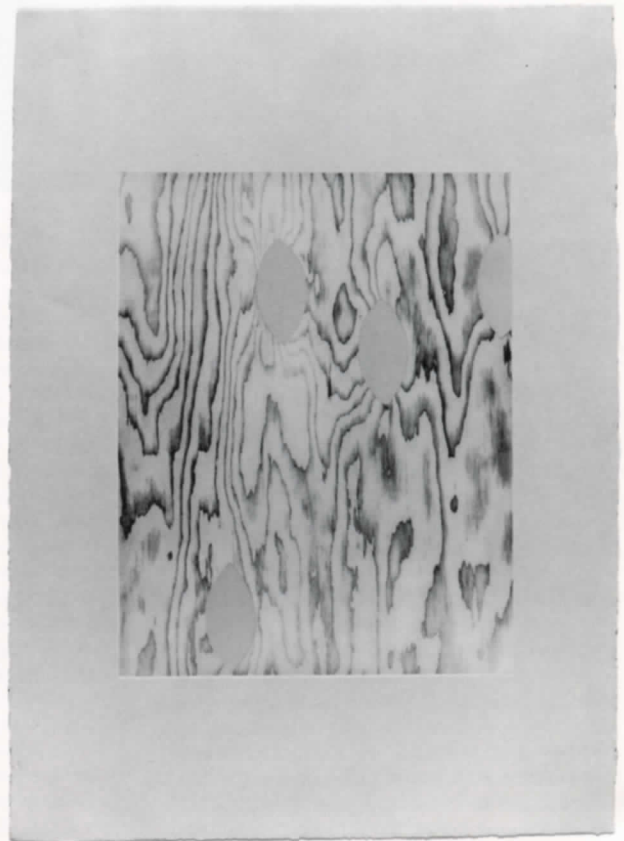
Katsura Funakoshi, *The Book Half Read*, 1990, soapground etching, paper size: 26 1/2 x 20 1/2"; image size: 15 5/8 x 11 3/4", edition 30



Katsura Funakoshi, *In the Room with High Ceiling*, 1990, soapground etching, paper size: 30 x 22"; image size: 15 7/8 x 11 3/4", edition 30



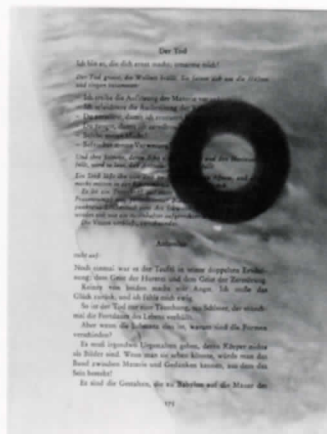
Sherrie Levine, *Barcham Green Portfolio, No. 1*, 1986, aquatint etching, paper and image size: 31 x 22 1/2", edition 25



Sherrie Levine, *Barcham Green Portfolio, No. 4*, 1986, aquatint etching, paper size: 31 x 22 1/2"; image size: 18 7/8 x 14 7/8", edition 25



Tim Rollins + K.O.S., *The Temptation of Saint Antony XXIII—The Solitaries*, 1990, aquatint etching with photo-gravure, chine collé, paper size: 16 1/4 x 11 11/16"; image size: 4 1/4 x 2 11/16", edition 15



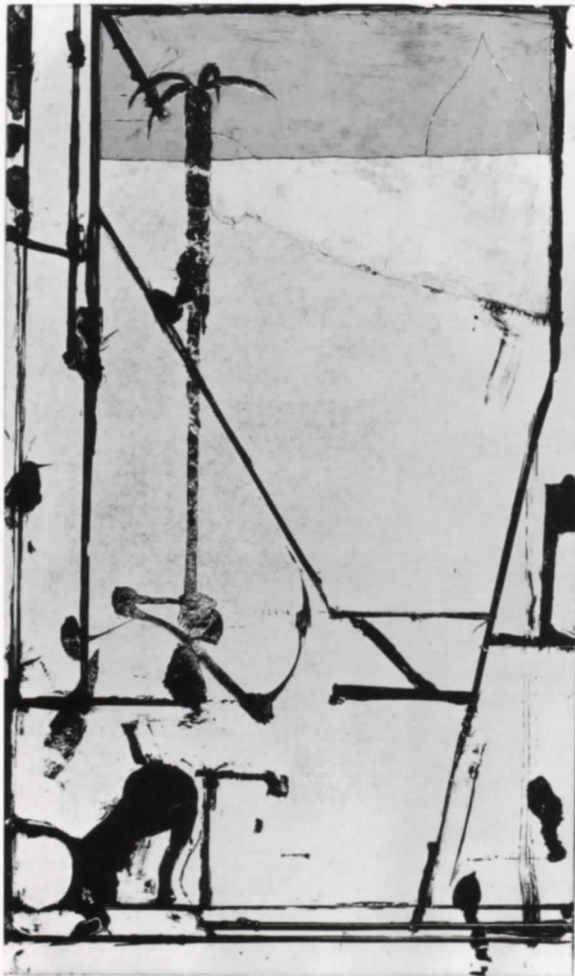
Tim Rollins + K.O.S., *The Temptation of Saint Antony XXXVI—The Sun*, 1990, hand-worked aquatint etching with chine collé, paper size: 24 x 18 1/2"; image size: 11 x 8 1/2", 9/35



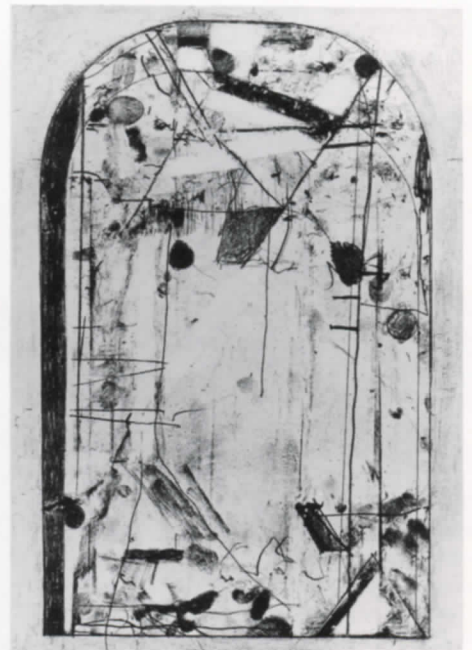
José Maria Sicilia, *Sbikibu*, 1989, color woodblock print, paper and image size: 25 1/2 x 30 1/4", edition 100



Richard Diebenkorn, *Ne comprends pas*, 1990, aquatint etching, paper size: 14 1/2 x 15 3/8"; image size 6 1/2 x 8 3/8", edition 25



Richard Diebenkorn, *Passage I*, 1990, color aquatint etching, paper size: 29 1/2 x 20 1/4"; image size: 20 1/2 x 12 1/4", edition 35



Richard Diebenkorn, *Domino I*, 1990, softground etching, paper size: 21 x 16"; image size: 13 x 9", edition 35

(continued from front cover)

Marioni, and Pat Steir are follow-ups on pieces released last year.

Robert Bechtle is a painter who lives in San Francisco. He reacted against abstract expressionist art which was dominant when he was in art school by becoming, twenty-five years ago, a pioneer of the "photo-realist" style. He uses the space and smoothness characteristic of photography in his paintings. His images are full of light and mood and are delicately drawn.

Tom Marioni is also from San Francisco. He is a conceptual artist (that is, idea-oriented); in fact, his work over the past twenty years has helped define conceptual art. Presently he makes sculpture which uses found objects and drawings which use his body rhythms and balance as a key element.

Pat Steir lives in New York; she is a painter of great feeling, working with gesture and mark since the late 1960s. Her work, which has influenced many younger artists, hovers between nature and the abstract and often includes a text, a lesson, or a reference to art history.

Janis Provisor, Li Lin Lee and Robert Kushner all traveled to China this year to make woodblock prints, Lee and Kushner after the earthquake, Provisor just before.

Janis Provisor has been exhibiting her paintings, which come from nature filtered through her perceptions, for about ten years. She often uses a loose form of patterning or multi-panel construction; her work is influenced by the philosophy and technique of ancient Chinese brush painting. She lives in New York.

Li Lin Lee is a young artist; his work is just beginning to be exhibited. He works with surfaces and with pattern, incorporating the use of stencils into his work method. His family left their homeland of China after Mao came to power; he was born in Indonesia and has lived in Chicago most of his life—before this trip he had not been to China.

Robert Kushner, who lives in New York, is one of the leaders of the "patterning and decoration" movement in art and has been an influential artist and theorist for more than a decade; his work is usually colorful, always full of energy and life.

Aside from our Japan and China situations, we did one other project last year outside our San Francisco studios. **Alex Katz** worked in etching with Doris Simmelink who worked with us as a printer for many years before moving to Los Angeles. Alex Katz is a New York painter concerned with figuration, with flatness and with style. He began to work with these concerns in the 1950s and kept on developing them, outside the mainstream; now he is considered a strong influence on the art of the '80s.

In San Francisco, we did manage to produce quite a few etchings, though many projects had to be postponed. In the first days after the earthquake we moved out of our Folsom Street space amid aftershocks, knowing the building would be condemned and working fast in order to get everything out before the authorities prohibited further entry. Most of our equipment went into storage. The printers who live in the East Bay took one of the small presses and set it up over

there, to use while the Bay Bridge was out, and in San Francisco one of our printers made his own studio available to us. Eventually we set up a studio in a storefront space in San Francisco near our temporary offices. We did three projects there: Gary Stephan, Tony Cragg, and Richard Diebenkorn.

Gary Stephan's work is philosophically oriented, precisely done. He has been a respected part of the New York painting scene since the late 1960s. He uses deep landscape space in an abstract way, lately with soft-edged spiraling shapes floating in it. His work is always filled with light. Stephan was the first artist to work in our temporary studio. Afterward, his work was the first to be editioned in the new building.

Tony Cragg is an English sculptor who lives in Germany and has been actively showing his work since the early 1980s. For this project, his second with us, he came to San Francisco for two weeks and ended up making forty-two different etchings! (Most artists do five or six in that time



The new gallery space

period.) This is appropriate for Cragg, who works in an accumulative way, combining and recombining images from "the object world" using a wide range of materials, forms, and techniques.

Richard Diebenkorn was the last artist to use our temporary etching studio. I had hoped he would be the first in the new building, but when the time came for him to work, construction was still in full swing. Diebenkorn was the first artist published by Crown Point Press in 1962. His attitudes toward making art shaped my ideas about how to approach working with artists ("doing something rather than making something"). He lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, and has been an artist for almost fifty years. The word "beauty" comes to mind in regard to his recent works, but there is something hard and gritty too; each painting, drawing, or print which he completes has in it a kind of stasis but also is full of visible flux and change.

We moved into the studios in the new building while construction continued and have managed to complete three artist projects here: Tim Rollins + K.O.S., Katsura Funakoshi, and Joel Fisher.

Tim Rollins + K.O.S. is an art collective led by a young conceptual artist, Tim Rollins, who works with a small group of teenagers (K.O.S.—Kids of

Survival) from the South Bronx in New York.

Five members of the group, along with Rollins, came to work with us (this is our second project with them). Though Rollins is the guiding spirit, the work is truly collaborative. It explores issues that have concerned many artists since the early 1970s, issues about what art is and how it can be made. The K.O.S. work is intellectually and emotionally challenging but at the same time visually seductive.

Katsura Funakoshi is a young sculptor from Tokyo who works in carved wood. His waist-up or full-figure portrayals of people are formal, conveying a detached, spiritual quality while being specific to an individual.

Joel Fisher is a conceptual artist who came of age in the 1970s concentrating on questions of how consciousness and perception are developed and on metamorphosis (he once pulped in a paper vat all his unsold work and re-formed it into new paper). He works now primarily in sculpture and drawing. He lives in New York.

That's the end of the list for this show. But the list, itself, continues without a break: we have work going on in Japan for Anish Kapoor, and in China for Richard Tuttle. Projects in the etching studio that were postponed because of the earthquake (or, later, because of construction delays) are now coming up: Al Held, Pat Steir, Markus Raetz, William Brice, and Richard Deacon. We also have projects scheduled with old friends, Sol LeWitt, Jannis Kounellis, and Bryan Hunt. Clemente plans to come out to San Francisco for a project; both Diebenkorn and Thiebaud have work in progress that they plan to finish sometime soon; and we have a new (to us) artist coming from Europe—Susana Solano.

So you can see that Crown Point Press is a place where a lot of work goes on. That is why we designed the October 20 opening of the new building the way we did, as an open house with printing demonstrations. We want to show the building living, breathing, working. Our woodblock printer from Japan, Tadashi Toda, is coming to demonstrate his craft, and one of our printers from China, Hu Qinyun, is also coming and will print woodblock prints in the traditional Chinese way. Our third studio will be occupied by our own Crown Point etching printers, who will be working.

Please join us if you can, but if you can't, visit us some other time. We'll be here!

All best regards,

Kathan Brown
President, Crown Point Press

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