

Overview

December 5, 1991

Dear Friends,

Last summer, we did a one-day workshop for our club members, mostly "art people" who are not printers or artists, and that was very successful. Now, we are planning a series of intensive workshops during July for people who want to take time to learn skills and produce editions of their own art. We'll give four week-long workshops for intaglio printing—both multiple plate and all on one plate. The instructors will be our master printers, and instruction will be given from 9 to 5 Monday through Thursday. On Friday and Saturday students will be able to sign up for press time so that they can edition the works they have made. The week-long workshops will probably cost about \$500 each, plus a materials fee.

Students will be able to learn to do the particular techniques they wish to use, and everyone should be able to produce at least one finished edition. Our new studios are very spacious and well-equipped, and the numbers of students will be limited (we plan to group students according to experience, and there will be space for beginners).

There will be more information later, but I wanted to mention it here, first, so the people already connected with us can have the first chance to sign up. If you're interested, call and leave a message for Joyce Umamoto at (415) 543-8138.

Now, another matter, also educational. I really appreciate those of you who wrote me to say they like the idea of *Ink, Paper, Metal, Wood*, my handbook about recognizing prints. I've written a draft of the introduction, which is short, and I thought I would try it out on you. So here it is. If you have any comments, I'd love to hear them.

All best wishes, and I hope your holidays were good ones.

Kathan Brown
President, Crown Point Press

P.S. I made a "home movie" videotape (25 minutes) of the watercolor monotype demonstration Wayne Thiebaud did for our club members, along with a walk through of his exhibition in our San Francisco gallery. If you want to send \$20, I'll make a VHS copy for you.

Ink, Paper, Metal, Wood: How to Recognize and Understand Contemporary Artists' Prints

(A draft of the beginning of a book by
Kathan Brown)

Introduction—What this book is.

This is a book about printmaking that sees printmaking as *not* special—not precious, not especially complicated or difficult, not fundamentally different from any other kind of art. Artists nowadays approach working on prints essentially the same way they approach working on paintings, sculpture or any other projects they are doing. But the materials are different.

Artists tend to see everything they work on as part of their work, part of on-going explorations that change the person so the person can change (develop) the art. Everything feeds into everything else. Finally, all the "works" that don't get de-

stroyed—the paintings, the prints, notebooks, homemade toys, anything that lasts—describe a time-line, the world as filtered through visual sensibility.

The works that end up in a collection, public or private, define a particular age for other people for centuries to come. We can go to a museum and seep up what it was like to live in the 19th century, for example—and maybe also come away with an insight into human beingness in general or some aspect of ourselves in particular. Of course, our experiences and our tastes may differ: the work of art that you get involved with may not be one that I find

touching. Even apart from the differences of one individual to the next, the designated "masterpieces" change from time to time; it's good that museums keep samples of practically everything.

Right now, it seems that museum exhibition design is headed toward integration: mixing up paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints—and also mixing "lesser" artworks with more celebrated ones from the same artist or of the same time period. Exhibitions are defined by chronology or by a concept shared by the works rather than by the medium used or by choosing only the artist's "masterpieces." This allows us to follow trains of thought, to notice a quiet aria as well as the great chorus within the opera. John Russell has written enthusiastically in the *New York Times* about this trend; I mention it here because my approach to printmaking is to assume that it *is* integrated. Prints provide a change of pace, more intimate but not

necessarily less interesting than an artist's work in other media.

This book, however, for practical reasons, segregates. It's entirely about prints. And, besides that, most of the text will deal with the least important things about prints: what they're made of, what they're called. The important thing—the artist's concept, the artist's vision—will be touched on, but this book is elementary: Lesson 1. It will tell you how you can recognize a print and name its process; how to tell if the printing is good, and whether that matters; how to take care of the print if that's your responsibility. It's something to build on, a way to begin. It gives you a chance to turn acquaintance into friendship; it offers an opening conversation, the beginning of a dialogue.

Another thing: we're not in the 19th century. You can go to a museum and enjoy the look and feel of that time; you won't find it here. All the artists included in this book belong to the time in which are presently living, and are consciously working within it. If some of their works seem inaccessible, you should realize that maybe we haven't quite digested our own time yet. As an artist once said to me: "The obscure we see eventually; the completely apparent takes a little longer."

Finally, you should know that despite its instructive nature, this book is written from my personal point of view. I may sometimes mention approaches different from my own (as in the use of the word "collaboration" for example) but I am not setting out to present a book that is definitive in the field. Although (in the interests of completeness) I give rudimentary information about all the major print processes, it is etching and woodblock printing which are emphasized, because they are what I know best and because I believe them to be more complex, more flexible and more beautiful than the other forms of printmaking.

The artists whose work is in this book live in the United States, Europe and Japan. Most of them are painters and sculptors and are not known primarily for their prints, although all of them have made a good number of prints in association with professional printers at Crown Point Press. I founded Crown Point Press 30 years ago in 1962; until 1982 we worked only in etching. For the past ten years we have also published woodblock prints printed in a centuries-old traditional manner in Japan and (beginning in 1987) China. I am a printer myself, and was trained as an artist, so this book draws on my hands-on, long-term experience in the field, combined with insights and information from the printers and artists of Crown Point Press.

Gallery Exhibitions

The following exhibitions will be on view in our San Francisco and New York galleries this winter and spring.

San Francisco and New York, through January 11, 1992,
The Image Exposed, featuring new photogravures by
John Baldessari and Markus Raetz

San Francisco and New York, January 16 - February 29,
1992, **Anish Kapoor and Janis Provisor**

San Francisco and New York, March 5 - April 18, 1992,
Richard Diebenkorn Prints



Master printers Renée Bott and Pamela Paulson with Richard Diebenkorn in the Crown Point Press studio, San Francisco, November 1991.

New Editions

We are very pleased to announce the release of two new etchings by **Richard Diebenkorn**, one in color and one in black and white.

The formal structure of *Touched Red*, which the artist began working on in the spring of 1990, is based on the loose cubist geometry that characterizes Diebenkorn's *Ocean Park* works of the past 20 years. The central area, created with spitbite aquatint, has an overall rose and umber tonality. This relatively open field is traversed by a series of vertical pink softground lines. Wide areas along the left and bottom of the print are arenas of greater activity. A pink square at the upper left corner contains a bright red form that looks like a fragment of an arrowhead. Below the square are two interlocking curvilinear forms, one yellow-ochre, the other turquoise. The shape and placement of the roughly circular light yellow and dark blue form at the lower left of the etching completes the perfectly realized composition in which all of the elements are held together in an asymmetrical balance. The image on the whole is soft and delicate in color and simply organized in vertical bands of varying widths and densities, but small, eccentric shapes and accents of bright color give the print a lively feel.

Flotsam, a black and white aquatint etching with drypoint, has antecedents in some of Diebenkorn's drawings of the early 1980s in which a variety of discrete signs and marks are scattered across the paper. What could be described as spades, crosses, arrows, targets, buttons, along with unusual shapes, difficult to name, surround an empty area dominated by an elongated oval. Scraped and burnished areas reveal Diebenkorn's process of composing—adding and subtracting—to change a shape or alter a line. The sense of a pictographic but coded alphabet is strong. Diebenkorn has created in *Flotsam* a work in which dynamic movement is precariously held in check. The new prints will be featured in an exhibition of Diebenkorn's etchings at Crown Point's San Francisco and New York galleries beginning March 5th. Major exhibitions of Diebenkorn's paintings and works on paper were held respectively at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, and Knoedler & Company, New York, in the fall of 1991. That year Diebenkorn was also awarded the United States National Medal of Arts.

Currently showing in our San Francisco and New York galleries are new photogravures by **John Baldessari** and **Markus Raetz**, both of whom worked for the first time at Crown Point Press last summer.

John Baldessari's recent retrospective exhibition organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, traced the artist's prolific development over nearly thirty years, from his first word paintings poking fun at formalist tenets, such as *Pure Beauty*, to his most recent, increasingly large, multipart photographic collages.

Though the look of Baldessari's work has changed, its basic premise has not. He has continued to ask the question, "what is art?" The beginnings of this investigation can be said to date from 1970, the year the artist ritually "cremated" all of his paintings in his possession, symbolically ridding himself of the rules governing art-making he had learned in school. (He once said, "Life's got to be more than deciding what color goes next to another color.") He set out to discover just what was essential in an art work and came to the conclusion that

the idea, above all else, is what mattered. That realization led to works that became known as some of the earliest examples of conceptual art. Having abandoned text in his work by the early 1980s, he now uses images "as surrogates for words," as once words replaced images. His newest work is for the most part less insistently cerebral than before, and based more on psychological and emotional concerns.

In his four new photogravure and aquatint prints, Baldessari juxtaposes photographic images, mostly film stills culled from his encyclopaedic collection. A gridded arrangement of the faces of six men, all in the process of being gagged, is titled *Six Colorful Gags (Male)*. (Puns in Baldessari's work are always intentional.) The artist, using the technique of spitbite aquatint, lightly toned the black and white photogravure images in one of the primary or secondary colors. Baldessari assigns symbolic meanings to the colors he uses: blue represents hope, yellow chaos, red danger, and green safety. Viewing these victims, one is made aware of various facial expressions—grimacing, widening of the eyes, etc.—that connote fear or pain. At the same time, without knowing the story (are these all "good guys" or might some deserve to be muzzled?) any attempt at interpretation finally seems ridiculous. Baldessari has made numerous works on the subject of violence, a persistent theme in the entertainment media from which many of his photographs derive.

Hands are the unifying factor in a smaller vertical print, *Hand and Chin (With Entwined Hands)*. If violence is the theme of *Six Colorful Gags*, here it might be tenderness. The top image shows a hand (yellow) touching a chin (blue). These closely cropped, softly colored body fragments are shown against a dark, velvety background in which almost all detail has been obliterated by layers of spitbite aquatint. The photo beneath portrays two entwined hands, one pale green, the other pink. Those familiar with Baldessari's strategy know that the two images originate from two unrelated sources, yet may find themselves wanting to make a connection. Is the couple at the top (if it is a couple) the same one that is implied below? One can only guess. One cannot even identify with any certitude the gender of the people to whom these hands belong, throwing into question many assumptions about the meaning of the gestures depicted. Because the images are reduced to just a few forms against undifferentiated backgrounds, this is the most abstract print in the series.

The colorful *To Insert: Person and Ladder (Red)/Hose/Smoke; Flowers and Plates (Blue Hope)* is a cropped image of a bouquet of yellow roses on a table with five elegantly patterned, variously colored dinner plates inserted into the middle of a another scene. It is obvious that a fire is taking place, although the burning house has all but been eliminated to make way for the inset elegant table setting (standing for the presumably lost interior contents of the home?). Engigmatically, a man in profile, completely colored in red, looks off to the side, as if unconcerned.

Lastly, a T-shaped composition, *Person with Conscience (Green)/Animals Quiescent (Yellow)* depicts a man whose features disappear under a modulated layer of orange aquatint. On his shoulder a small doll, the proverbial little green man, is awkwardly balanced. The horizontal photo above is of two lions in repose alongside a dead water buffalo apparently dragged by a rope to its location. Is Baldessari commenting on culture (humans and

their capacity for guilt) versus nature (animals whose lives are driven by instinct)? Here, as in *Person With Ladder*, the frame follows the irregular geometric contour of the images.

Swiss artist **Markus Raetz** has been dealing with shadow and reflection throughout his career. He approaches the subject in photogravure, a medium new to him, in three black and white prints recently completed at Crown Point Press. To create these haunting images, Raetz combined the principle of photogram—a photograph made without a camera by exposing an image directly onto photo-sensitive paper using natural or artificial light—with photogravure—a continuous tone intaglio process using gelatin pigment tissue to transfer a photographic image onto a copper plate for etching and printing.

The object Raetz exposed onto the plate was a hand-held mirror on which he had drawn a simple outline of a face in three-quarter view. He situated the mirror in the path of the sunlight that streamed through the skylight onto the studio floor. In *Reflexion I* and *II*, mirror and hand appear as dark shadows casting a light reflection of the face on the mirror. The angle at which the mirror was held in relation to the light source determined the degree of distortion—in *Reflexion I* the shapes are elongated ellipses, while in *Reflexion II* they are closer to the actual round shape of the mirror. In *Reflexion III*, the face is seen as a large ellipse extending diagonally across the dark page with no reference to the hand or mirror source. In all three works in the series, the edges of the various forms are soft as a result of the slight movement of the artist's hand during the relatively long exposures. Raetz's means here are characteristically simple. Using just a few elements—a mirror, crayon, the sun, light sensitive tissue—he has created a mysterious, dream-like theater of shadow and light.

The unifying theme in Raetz's work, whether it be drawing, painting, sculpture, or printmaking, is the poetic investigation of perception. For *Schatten (Shadows)*, a vertical column of six images, Raetz fashioned a continuous, curvilinear object from plastic-sheathed electrical wire. Again using the photogram-gravure process, Raetz placed the object in indirect sunlight so as to form a shadow line. The closer the object was to the photo-sensitive tissue, the darker and crisper it is; conversely, the farther away, the softer and lighter. This variation in the tonal value of the line creates a spatial reading of the form. In the lowermost image, the artist oriented the object to read as the outline of a pipe. In each of the successive images, Raetz rotated the wire without changing it. Read frame by frame, it appears to curl and twist, at times compressed into an calligraphic play of overlapping lines, at others expanding into an open form. To Raetz, these variations suggest smoke rising from the pipe, a comical allusion to Magritte ("Ceci n'est pas une pipe"). It is not

(continued on page 6)

View

New issues of View, our interview series, include Anish Kapoor, Alex Katz, and Pat Steir. These complete Volume VII, containing also interviews with Katsura Funakoshi, Janis Provisor, and Gary Stephan. They can be purchased in either our San Francisco or New York Galleries or by mail from San Francisco. The price of individual issues by mail is \$6 and boxed volumes \$35; (outside the U.S. \$8 and \$39). These prices include postage. California residents add 8.25% sales tax.

To order, please send your request, along with your payment, to: VIEW, Crown Point Press,

657 Howard Street,

San Francisco, California 94105.

Please write us for a complete listing of our publications.



Richard Diebenkorn, *Touched Red*, 1991, softground, aquatint, and spitbite aquatint etching with drypoint, paper size: 35½ x 26½", image size: 24 x 16½", edition 85



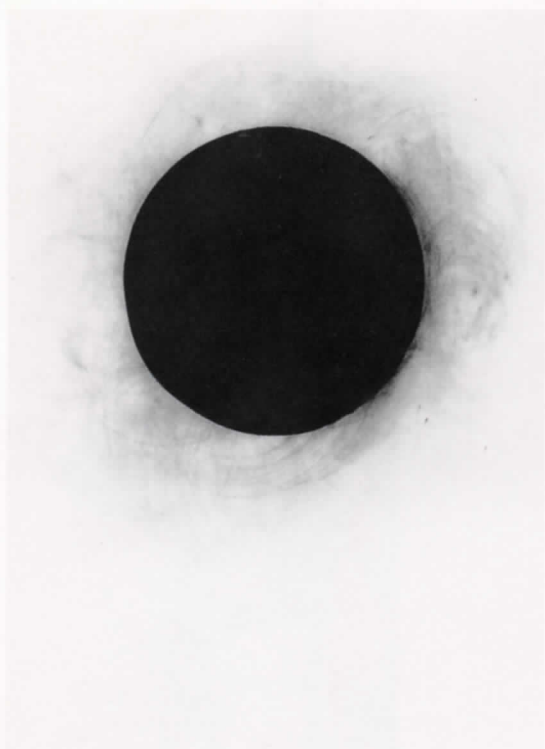
John Baldessari, *To Insert: Person and Ladder (Red) / Hose / Smoke: Flowers and Plates (Blue Hope)*, 1991, photogravure and aquatint etching, paper size: 36 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 27", image size: 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 19", edition 25



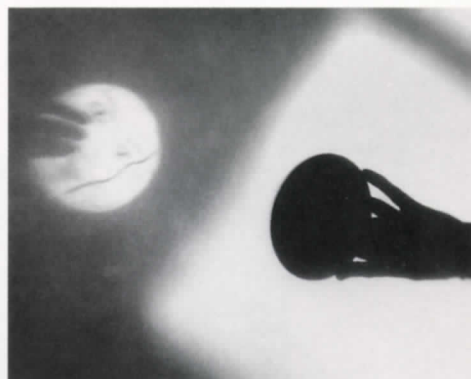
Janis Provisor, *Philtre Black*, 1991, spitbite aquatint and soap-ground etching with drypoint and chine collé, paper size: 44 x 37 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", image size: 31 x 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", edition 10



Anish Kapoor, *Racine*, 1991, aquatint and spitbite etching, paper size: 36 x 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", image size: 28 x 24", edition 25



Anish Kapoor, *Untitled A*, 1991, aquatint and pigment monoprint, paper size: 54½ x 41", image size: 21½" diameter, from a series of 4



Markus Raetz, *Relexton II*, 1991, photogram-gravure and aquatint etching, paper size: 36 x 42", image size: 19 x 26", edition 35



Richard Diebenkorn, *Flotsam*, 1991, aquatint etching with drypoint, paper size: 34 x 26½", image size: 24 x 18", edition 85

(Kapoor continued from page 2)

unusual for Raetz to work with anamorphic imagery. He has made several wall pieces composed of sticks or leaves that from a specific viewing position cohere into a recognizable, figurative form.

Raetz's obsession with the function of vision is most explicitly demonstrated in a small soapground etching titled *Views*. Here Raetz reworks an image with which he is identified—cone-shaped forms emanating from a pair of eyes. The image may be interpreted as a quasi-scientific diagram for the process of seeing or perhaps metaphorically for vision beyond the immediate mundane world. Raetz's intervention into our world is sure but gentle. His works, like poetry, require intimacy and time to reveal themselves.

Last summer was a busy one at Crown Point Press. In addition to working with Baldessari and Raetz, we also completed projects by **Anish Kapoor** and **Janis Provisor**.

During his second residency at the press, British sculptor **Anish Kapoor** created five etchings and several series of aquatint and pigment prints. As in his previous prints, Kapoor composed most of his new works around a central core. *Magnetic Field*, *Mother of Light*, two of the largest of the new series, and *Door*, have at their center a white curved or rectangular form, an implied interiority, analogous to the physical holes in Kapoor's recent sculptures. Kapoor views the void, not, as he said in a recent interview, as "a dead space...[but as] the space of potential... the space of possibility." In the drypoint *Magnetic Field*, a thick web of black swirling lines emanate from and encircle two centrally placed, nearly touching white ovals. The delicate tendril-like brown lines in *Door* fan out from a white rectangle to the margins of the print. Similarly, in *Mother of Light*, the central white area, a negative space created by two kidney-shaped forms, acts as the quiet center of a field of activity.

Kapoor feels an affinity with the spitbite aquatint process which yields softly modulated areas of color, at times as transparent as watercolor. The burnt sienna aqueous washes of *Mother of Light* and the light brown earth tones of *Racine* are examples of the fluidity and tonal variation that can be achieved with spitbite. In *Untitled 12*, also colored

in brown earth tones, two bulbous forms fill the upper left diagonal area of the print while the rest of the page is left empty.

In a majestic series of pigment aquatints Kapoor moved from the earth tones of the etchings to deep blues, reds and blacks. Rubbing intensely colored powdered pigments into a freshly printed aquatint image, Kapoor, in these prints, refers to the pigment covered sculptures for which he is known. *Mother as a Void* is characterized by a large blue square. Since each print is hand rubbed by the artist, no two are identical. Marks of the process and traces of the pigment are evident around the color-ed square. In *Untitled B*, an edition of five, the field around a white lozenge-shaped area is covered with deep red or black pigment. Other motifs include a large black circle, a small blue square, and so on.

For Kapoor, art has to do with passion and belief, with revealing an inner state. As an artist, he doesn't set out to express an idea or to make a beautiful object, but rather to act as a conduit which allows "a thing to give of its own, to be of its own." If as a result, the sculpture, or the drawing, or the print is beautiful, it is because he has achieved that perfect balance that, for example, one finds in nature. As Kapoor eloquently explained, "...if one looks at nature, the forming of a cloud, or a stone, or a drop of water, there's never an incorrect drop of water, or an out of balance cloud, or an unaesthetic stone." A survey of Kapoor's work will premiere at the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art in February and will travel to several other institutions in the U.S. and Canada.

Janis Provisor completed six new etchings in her second project with Crown Point Press. In these new prints, Provisor further explores her fascination with nature. As in her paintings, Provisor builds up the surface to create dense, multi-layered and landscape-inspired abstractions. The etchings were printed on a sheet of Japanese Gampi paper adhered to rag printing paper, which adds a physical tactility and a translucent quality to the surface.

Star Trap and *Star Throw*, the two smaller prints of the group, contain a dusting of metallic material that Provisor commonly uses in her paintings. Both prints include the recognizable form of a starfish that seems to buoy in a pool of porous matter.

Although both have similar background patterns, a yellow-green, bright orange, and pink ground dominates *Star Trap* while ochre and bronze patterned layers appear in *Star Throw*. In the right portion of the latter, a whimsical, calligraphic line descends from a cellular form into a fibrous tangle of vines and roots.

A permutation of this calligraphic form becomes the central image in the four larger prints. As with the starfish shape in the smaller prints, the tangled mass recedes into and interacts with the layers of background patterning and color. In *Hinterland* pale pink and dull bronze areas similar to watermarks move downward in vertical waves. The forms—tendrils and blossoms and gourd-like shapes—fall and drip into the liquid landscape. The same plates were used for the ochre and pink background in *Bobemia*, where another wild tracery of dark, curvilinear lines and pod-like shapes floats as it begins to disintegrate into smaller drops of matter. *Philtre Black* and *Philtre Red* relate in their corresponding backgrounds as well as in the central mass of scrawled, curvilinear lines and shapes. In both, solid ovals of varying sizes appear and disappear among the aqueous layers much as raindrops would fall upon a deep and swiftly moving body of water.

Working from such influences as Chinese calligraphy and landscape painting as well as Abstract Expressionism, Provisor has imbued her visions of nature with a romantic and intimate psychology. Although her art is about the natural landscape found in everyday life, she said in a recent interview, "To me nature implies a much larger, much grander experience, both positive and negative, forceful and passionate..."

Constance Lewallen
Associate Director

Overview Editor: Constance Lewallen
Design: Brent A. Jones
© 1991 Point Publications
Published three times a year.

657 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
415.974.6273
FAX 415.495.4220

568 Broadway
New York, NY 10012
212.226.5476
FAX 212.966.7042