

# Overview



Waiting for the boat, Kweilin, China, 1988

## New Editions:

In the spring 1988 issue of *Overview*, Kathan Brown talked about Crown Point's new woodblock program in the People's Republic of China. As in our Japanese woodblock project established in 1982, artists collaborate with professional carvers and printers who follow traditional woodblock methods. The Chinese woodblock tradition, however, predates and varies from that of the Japanese. We have just released the first group of prints made in China. All of them are printed with water-based ink on silk and mounted on paper.

Tom Marioni, the first artist to travel with us to China, produced two works in the medium; *Peking*, printed in Beijing, and *Pi*, printed in Hangzhou. Marioni used a feather

to create the marks in the original drawings for these prints. *Peking*, a gestural, black upward stroke on an ochre field, belongs to a group of works by Marioni that are graphic evidence of a physical action, as in the 1972 drawing, *Drawing a Line as Far as I Can Reach*. *Pi*, a red, calligraphic rendering of the symbol of the same name, relates to mathematics, astronomy and art, as well as to the merging of Eastern and Western cultures. Marioni also created a new aquatint, *Feather Line*, in our San Francisco studio. *Feather Line*, a companion to his 1986 aquatint *Feather Circle*, was also drawn with a feather. All three of Marioni's new images are characteristically simple and elegant.

Robert Bechtle's *Potrero Houses*—

*Pennsylvania Avenue*, printed at Beijing's Rong Bao Zhai studio, was derived, as are all his subjects, from a photograph. The artist invigorates the ordinary scene with a strong, abstract composition dominated by the diagonal of the street. The pale color and soft light of the image are emphasized by the silk on which it is printed.

Pat Steir's two editions produced in China are *Seascape*, printed at the Duo Yun Xuan studio in Shanghai, and *Kweilin Dreaming*, printed in Beijing. *Seascape*, the smaller of the two, is a subtle, abstract evocation of the sun setting over the water. Steir added some marks by hand in the upper right of each print in the edition. She did extensive

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## New Editions

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hand work on the larger *Kweilin Dreaming, Part A*, a work inspired by the sheer mountains of Kweilin. Steir visited Kweilin when she went to China to work on the woodblock with the Chinese printers. She plans a Part B, using the same print as the basis for another hand-painted series.

Our Japanese program continues with two new releases by Robert Moskowitz, *Moon Dog* and *The Red and the Black*. Moskowitz consistently reinterprets an image in several media. He has portrayed versions of each of these images previously in paintings and in drawings. *The Red and the Black* is a horizontal composition depicting three birds on a tree branch. The subject was inspired by Moskowitz's earlier trips to Japan but, even in its woodblock form, retains a decidedly Western flavor. In the grey and black *Moon Dog*, a dog barks at the moon. Moskowitz worked with Tadashi Toda, the printer, to print the dog as dark as possible without losing a feeling of density or the subtle tonal variations within the form of the animal.

Al Held returned to Crown Point's San Francisco etching studio for the third time at the end of the year and created a State II of his 1987 black and white hardground, *Straits of Malacca*. Held reworked the entire plate with additional lines to achieve a denser and darker version of the first state. In his paintings, Held will often base the compositional structure of a new work on a previous painting. Here the etching process allowed him to build on an earlier composition by drawing directly on the original plate.

Held also completed *Almost There*, a colorful and dynamic aquatint and hardground. He derived the basic linear structure from one of the two images in his large color etching *Out and In* (1987) but altered the palette dramatically. His main concern in this and other recent works is the creation of a completely new type of abstract light.

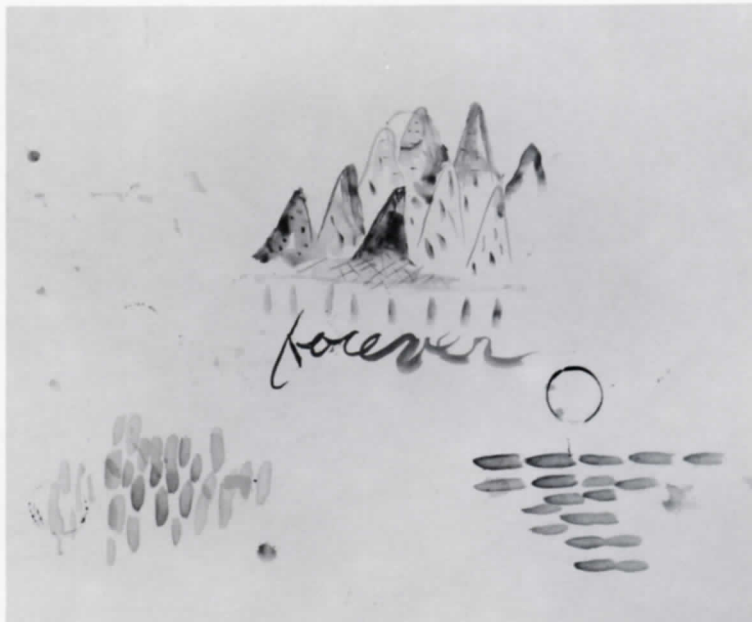
*Putu*, an etching in over 40 colors, reflects the influence of Held's recent watercolor series painted in Rome last year. As in the watercolors, Held used large volumetric forms, each in a single, modulated hue. The effect of watercolor was achieved by printing a spitbite over or under the aquatints.

Anish Kapoor, an artist best known for organic sculptures dusted with intensely colored loose pigment, worked at Crown Point Press for the first time last fall. In his initial foray into the medium, Kapoor produced a series of lush images in aquatint and spitbite. In Kapoor's newest sculptures, hollowed-out, unpainted stone volumes are penetrated with richly-colored interior crevices drawing the eye inward. Similarly, in his etchings, areas of intense color—red or blue—radiate from dark backgrounds. In all of his work, Kapoor draws on the culture of his native India (Kapoor has lived in

London since he was seventeen) to suggest both the merging of the sexual and the spiritual, as well as the material and the immaterial.

At this writing, we are printing Kapoor's new etchings as well as a new series of works by John Cage. Both will be exhibited in June in our New York and San Francisco galleries, following the current exhibition of Bryan Hunt's new etchings.

Constance Lewallen  
Associate Director



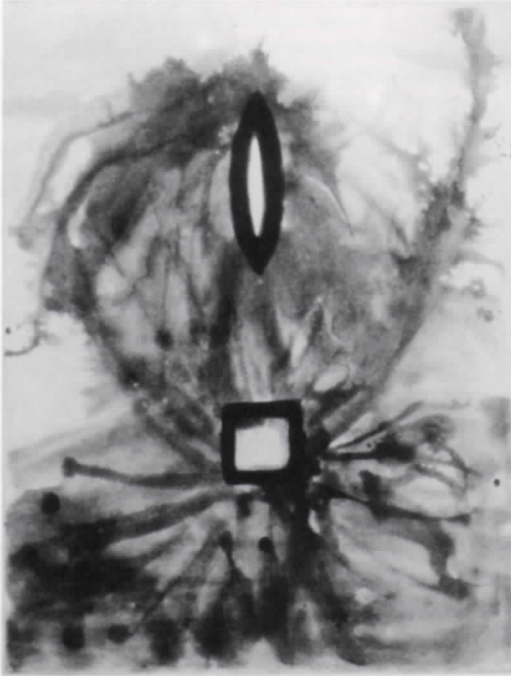
Pat Steir, *Kweilin Dreaming, Part A* (#1), 1989, hand-painted woodblock print on silk chine collé, 37½ × 42¾", from the first 35 of a planned group of 100.



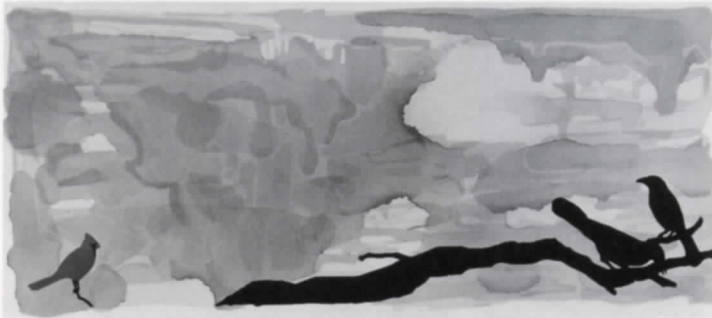
Robert Bechtle, *Potrero Houses—Pennsylvania Avenue*, 1989, color woodblock on silk chine collé, 27 × 26", edition 45.



Anish Kapoor, *Untitled 3*, 1988, spitbite and aquatint,  $27\frac{1}{4} \times 20\frac{1}{8}$ ", edition 20.



Anish Kapoor, *Untitled III*, 1988 spitbite, aquatint and sugarlift,  $42 \times 51\frac{1}{2}$ ", edition 20.



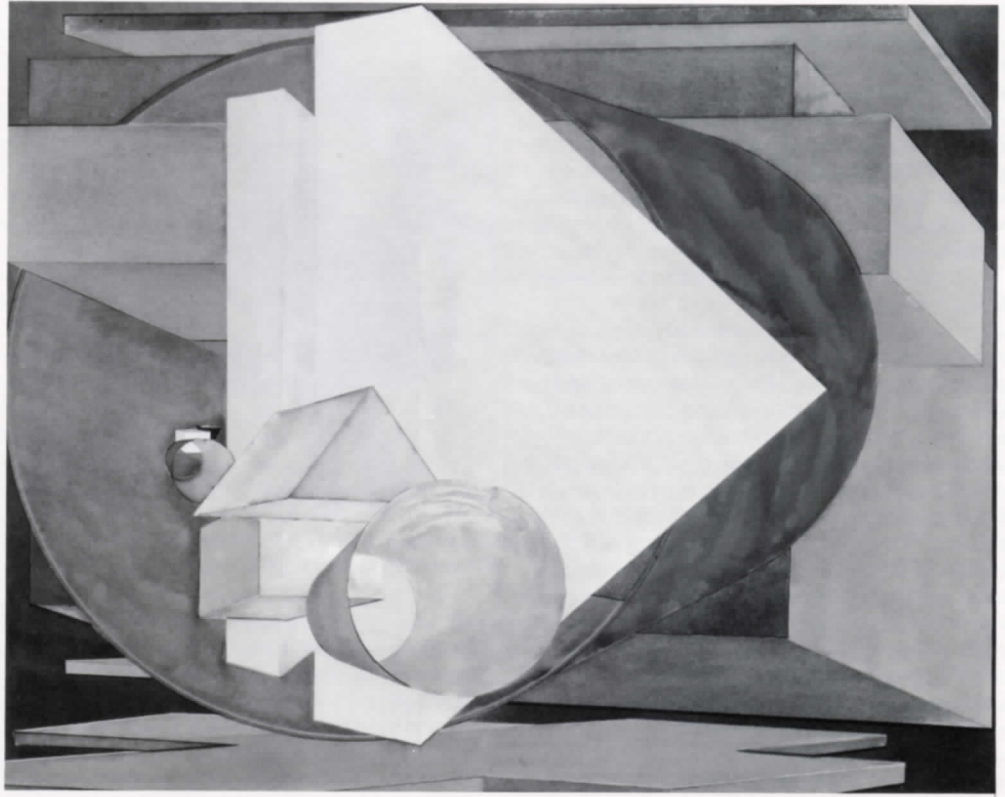
Robert Moskowitz, *The Red and the Black*, 1988, color woodblock,  $13\frac{3}{4} \times 24$ ", edition 75.



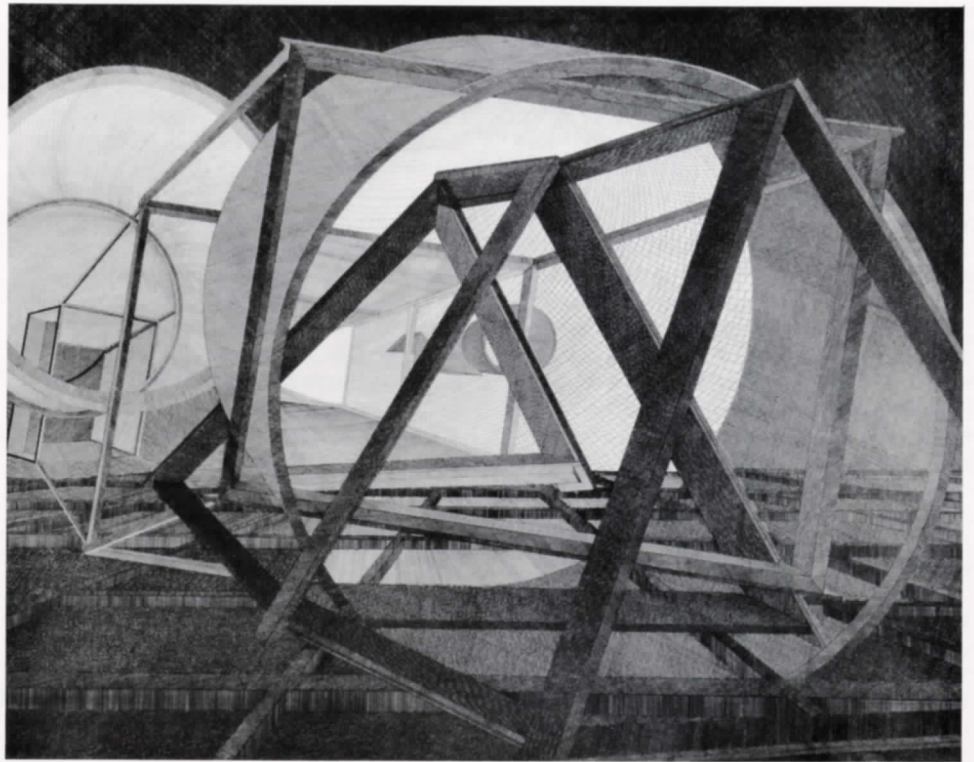
Robert Moskowitz, *Moon Dog*, 1988, color woodblock,  $19 \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ ", edition 75.



Tom Marioni, *Peking*, 1989, color woodblock on silk chine collé, 27¼ × 20¾", edition 35.



Al Held, *Putu*, 1989, color etching with aquatint and spitbite, 40½ × 54", edition 60.



Al Held, *Straits of Malacca II*, 1989, hardground etching, 41¾ × 51½", edition 10.



## Dear Friends,

My topic this time is the most frequently asked question by visitors to Crown Point Press: "How do you choose your artists?" Difficult as this is to answer, it's an astute question—the artists are, of course, the heart of the press. No matter how accomplished technically or accommodating to clients or administratively well-organized we may be, we are nothing without our artists.

When I started Crown Point Press in 1962 it was with an evangelical spirit about etching. I was a painter who had gotten involved with printmaking by accident, had gotten a press by accident. I was young and idealistic; I looked around and saw some activity in lithography by non-printmaking artists, but none in etching, which I thought was a much more interesting process. So I started Crown Point for myself and my friends. We worked in the basement of my house in Berkeley for ten years, and even after moving the studio to Oakland most of the artists stayed at my house while working. Now we're in San Francisco and we're larger and better organized and have an artist apartment and an artist car and so on, but still, I think a main reason artists work with us is that they trust me. They know they'll be in a position to do the best work they can, without obstacles; in fact, if they've been here before or if they've talked with someone who has, they know that everything will be organized so that they're comfortable and so their work will go well.

When we invite artists to work with us we give 100% commitment to them and their work. We do ask something in return—that they take printmaking seriously, that they're willing to take time away from their studios and immerse themselves in this. Nowadays artists have so many opportunities to travel and have so many demands on their time, that it may be tempting to go with a print publisher who promises to bring printers or paraphernalia to their own studios. But, in the long run, I was told by an artist who tried that, it's easier to come here, and the work ends up better. Anyhow, it's not our style to take plates to artists and hope they'll scratch on them and send them back for processing. And, also, we don't keep pressing and calling if someone doesn't indicate interest. We want artists who want us.

But assuming there are many artists who want us, how do we go about making the connection? Well, we don't "look at slides." The literal, straight-ahead answer is that Karen McCready, Connie Lewallen and I get together and decide who to ask. We always have people returning, so though we work with a dozen or so artists a year, only three or four are new to us. Our decisions come from seeing, from real experience, and usually have been "cooking" for some time. We all go to a lot of shows. Connie and I



Connie Lewallen with Anish Kapoor in his London studio, June, 1988.

(who live in San Francisco) each visit New York five or six times a year, as well as going once a year to Europe and twice a year to Asia; Karen (who lives in New York) comes to California three or four times a year and goes to Europe at least twice. But seeing isn't everything. We all read a lot, and talk to other people. We try to see where our artists and our potential artists fit into the scheme of things—is there a possibility that that artist, even in a small way, will change the way the world looks at things?

What we're looking for, besides that elusive thing called "quality," is originality, intelligence and staying power. Staying power is maybe the trickiest of these: Is this artist going to be an artist until he/she dies? Will an art historian working 100 years from now recognize this name? An artist who works with us should have a track record first—some shows outside his hometown, some articles in the art press, some acknowledgement from his peers (if an artist has clearly influenced other artists, that's a sure sign of staying power).

I called "quality" elusive because it's so hard to define abstractly. In practice, we all agree, no doubt about it, that this is a good artist, this is a real artist, this is an artist who's doing something that's worth doing. This last, doing something that's worth doing, is a serious judgment, one that we talk quite a bit about. Style doesn't have much to do with our decisions, except that we do try to have artists who work in a lot of different styles. We never try to second-guess the artist by trying to think whether or not his work would make good prints. If the artist is a good artist and he thinks he'd like to try printmaking, then he will probably make good prints. "Who would have thought," someone remarked in our Tony Cragg show, "that Tony Cragg could draw!" I hadn't

thought about it one way or the other—anyway, we do work, very successfully, with people who can't (or don't) draw (as well as those who can). And, finally, we try as hard as possible not to let our own tastes interfere. Francesco Clemente is the example I keep before me in thinking about taste—when I first invited him to work with us in 1980, before he'd had a one-person show in New York, it was at the suggestion of another artist. I disliked his work when I first saw it—I was immersed in minimal and conceptual art; it's hard to remember, now, how strange Clemente's art looked then. Of course, as soon as we worked with him and I got to know him and see what he was doing, I became devoted. That kind of learning is the greatest reward of this kind of work.

This brings me to another point—what happens if the prints we make with an artist don't sell, would we still continue to do projects with the artist? I thought of that in talking about Clemente because, although we sold some of those early prints at the time they were done, the editions were very small and still it was only about three years ago that they sold out entirely. Even better examples would be Hans Haacke or Chris Burden, conceptual artists who were not widely understood in the '70s when we worked with them, but whose influence on the stream of art is now apparent—this work is now selling. So the answer to the question is, yes, we would work with an artist again even if his prints don't sell, at least once more. After that, if we still don't have sales, we'd probably wait awhile to make more prints, but keep working at selling.

Since we're not a museum or a public organization, have never applied for grants and, in fact, don't even have any "backers," we are really free to do as we like—and that is to be as serious as we are, but not to be suicidal. It's a nice challenge.

Now, for the end of this letter, a run-down on our immediate plans. Connie is going to Japan in May with David True, and at about the same time I'll be in China with Janis Provisor, working in the Duo Yun Xuan woodblock studio in Shanghai. Right now, William T. Wiley is working in our etching studio in San Francisco, and the next artist scheduled is Shoichi Ida. Also, before the end of the year we plan a project with Tim Rollins + K.O.S. Rollins is bringing four Kids of Survival members of his Art and Knowledge Workshop with him to San Francisco. They've "been studying the etching/aquaints of Goya like maniacs" according to Rollins, and are thinking of basing their project here on a novel by either Flaubert or Goethe. I'll let you know more in the next newsletter.

Kathan Brown  
President, Crown Point Press



## Letter from New York

The New York gallery marked its fourth year at the same time that Kathan Brown flew the entire staff to California for the big Christmas/New Year's bash. So for Kim, Meg, Jody and me the party was not only a seasonal celebration, but marked an important anniversary.

Our original concept for the gallery—to exhibit prints either in one-person exhibitions or theme shows—has worked out splendidly. One-person exhibitions have allowed us to view exciting print projects by such artists as Pat Steir and Tony Cragg in a comprehensive presentation worthy of their accomplished work. *Pastorale*, our most recent theme show, allowed us to see new

etchings by Markus Lüpertz in the context of work by Joan Jonas, Günter Brus and Robert Hudson, among others.

This year New York has undergone substantial renovation, converting the conference room into a library/computer center, and also adding much-needed storage in the form of a massive print cabinet. But growth has taken place not only in the physical plant but in terms of staff. We've grown from three to five—each person making an important contribution to the presentation and sale of Crown Point Press publications in a professional way. Kim Schmidt and Meg Malloy joined us a year ago—Kim as sales representative and Meg as gallery administrator and staff writer. Jody Rhone continues as our preparator and we welcome Jennifer Rotanz in a newly created position—gallery secretary and assistant to the director.

This letter is just to bring you up to date on changes and events in the New York gallery. Although distance separates us from the printmaking studio and California gallery, we are joined in the common purpose of continuous support of artists as they explore etching and woodblock printing.

Karen McCready  
Director



## Point Publications

We are pleased to announce three new issues of VIEW, our series of artists' interviews. Tony Cragg, Robert Moskowitz and Al Held are the first three of six interviews that will compose Volume VI. The Cragg is available now, and the Moskowitz and Held will be ready by the end of May, 1989.

Point Publications is offering two new catalogues to our retail clients. These can be purchased in our New York and San Francisco galleries or by mail.

*Pat Steir: Gravures, Prints 1976–1988.*  
(Published by Cabinet des estampes, Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva, Switzerland and The Tate Gallery, London, 1988.)

Elderfield, John. *The Drawings of Richard Diebenkorn.* (Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York and Houston Fine Art Press, 1988.)

Please write us for a complete list of our publications.

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### Overview

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