

CROWN POINT PRESS. It is rare to be given detailed first-hand information on the creative process involved in contemporary printmaking in addition to an examination of the running of a print workshop and of the technical execution of the prints themselves. Too often, authors focus



Richard Diebenkorn, #16 from 41 *Etchings Drypoints*, 1964, drypoint, 330 x 227 mm (Image courtesy Crown Point Press © The Estate of Richard Diebenkorn).



355. Richard Diebenkorn, *Touched Red*, 1991, aquatint, spitbite, soft-ground etching and drypoint, 610 x 406 mm (Washington, National Gallery of Art ©The Estate of Richard Diebenkorn).

on printmaking techniques questions, doubts and creative final results. The basic idea addressed, perhaps because later stage or kept in the archaically, too, the *spiritus rector* treats more on printing and explaining its fundamental books on Crown Point Press *Know That You Are Lucky* (San Francisco, 2012, 368 pp., 47 col. and 27 b. & w. plates) and *Maybe: Artists Working at Crown Point Press* (San Francisco, 2014, 239 pp., 151 col. and 9 b. & w. plates).

Brown set up her workshop in the district of San Francisco and she used the experience and during her studies in London print workshop, but also a printmaking and themselves use the press by Brown. At the same time, she was part of the 'Model Group', in which she worked directly on the plates. In one of her prints, she made a request to attend this group in the American printmaking. For once, she was involved in the life model group change (fig. 354). While in London, she was unable to make a living as an artist, she also worked as a typist, in 1955, for the first time, producing an album of prints. This was followed by artists like Robert Rauschenberg and Wayne Thiebaud. It is behind these prints in this period that Brown intersperses her observations at the press with a more general interest in the trajectory here is broadened. She collaborated on more than 100 prints with artists, among them John Cage, Ed Ruscha and Sol LeWitt. In the 1960s, Thiebaud, these are considered as the most used woodcut and silkscreen techniques. Brown's most significant contribution to printmaking can be found in her work. Although widely used everywhere, it is an old-fashioned technique. Brown's extraordinary range of techniques at Crown Point, especially in the 1960s and Greenhalgh's great achievement is a discussion of the evolving ideas and techniques of such artists as Chuck Close (fig. 355). Intaglio techniques like etching and their various recorded stages

on printmaking techniques to the exclusion of the various questions, doubts and creative struggles inherent to the final results. The basic ideas behind the works are hardly addressed, perhaps because trial proofs are destroyed at a later stage or kept in the archives and rarely exhibited. Inevitably, too, the *spiritus rector* of a print workshop concentrates more on printing and running the business than on explaining its fundamental concepts. Fortunately, two books on Crown Point Press fill the gap: Kathan Brown's *Know That You Are Lucky* (San Francisco, Crown Point Press, 2012, 368 pp., 47 col. and 271 b. & w. ills., \$28) and *Yes, No, Maybe: Artists Working at Crown Point Press* with essays by Judith Brodie and Adam Greenhalgh (exhibition catalogue, Washington, National Gallery of Art, 1 September 2013–5 January 2014, Washington, National Gallery of Art, 2013, 239 pp., 151 col. and 9 b. & w. ills., \$45).

Brown set up her workshop in 1962 in the Richmond district of San Francisco and called it Crown Point Press. She used the experience and skills she had gained partly during her studies in London. The space was not just a print workshop, but also a place where artists could work and themselves use the press or have their plates printed by Brown. At the same time, Brown organized a 'Life Model Group', in which she and her artist friends drew directly on the plates. In one case, a simple phone call with a request to attend this group changed the history of American printmaking. For once Richard Diebenkorn became involved in the life model group in 1962, things began to change (fig. 354). While in the press's first years, Brown was unable to make a living from printmaking and thus also worked as a typist, in 1965 she became a publisher for the first time, producing an artists' book by Diebenkorn. This was followed by artists' books by Beth Van Hoesen and Wayne Thiebaud. It is fascinating to follow the stories behind these prints in this autobiography, especially as Brown intersperses her observations on the artists working at the press with a more general outline of her activities. The trajectory here is broadly chronological but as she collaborated on more than one occasion with the same artists, among them John Cage, Pat Steir, Robert Bechtle, Ed Ruscha and Sol LeWitt as well as Diebenkorn and Thiebaud, these are considered together. Although she used woodcut and silkscreen printing for certain projects, Brown's most significant contribution to the history of printmaking can be found in the revival of etching. Although widely used even after World War II in both Europe and the United States, it was considered a rather old-fashioned technique. Brown changed this entirely with the extraordinary range of projects she developed at Crown Point, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. Brodie and Greenhalgh's great achievement is their detailed discussion of the evolving ideas and working processes of such artists as Chuck Close, Diebenkorn and Cage (fig. 355). Intaglio techniques like etching and engraving, with their various recorded stages of technical and aesthetic de-

velopment in the guise of trial proofs and states, reveal to an exceptional degree the choices, decisions and problems which occur during the realization of a project. The creative process, as becomes clear in both of these books, is neither strictly linear nor based on some kind of divine inspiration which just needs a hand to execute it; rather, it can involve a struggle to find the right solution and balance. Moreover, decisions in printmaking frequently involve observation and collaboration; prints by other artists can serve as inspiration and the individual experience of a master-printer might contribute as much to the final result as the original concept of the artist. Further, as these complementary publications so successfully demonstrate, this process, embodied by the work produced at Crown Point, should ideally be framed by a broad understanding of the medium, and a willingness to take artistic risks. CHRISTIAN RÜMELIN

**BRUCE ONOBRAKPEYA.** Born 30 August 1932, the son of a part-time Urhobo sculptor, the Nigerian artist Bruce Onobrakpeya is a painter, printmaker and sculptor who often mixes these techniques in a most innovative, experimental fashion. His artistic contribution is celebrated by a major publication, *Onobrakpeya: Masks of the Flaming Arrows*, edited by Dele Jegede (Milan, 5 Continents Editions, 2014, 400 pp. (2 foldout), 409 col. and 43 b. & w. ills., £65). The first section of the book contains twelve scholarly articles – some of these are reprints, others were lectures, but most are published here for the first time. The second section comprises a selection of works, grouped in themes, and is introduced by Onobrakpeya's own short explanation.

After starting his career as an art teacher, Onobrakpeya was admitted to the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology in Zaria in 1957 where he was formally trained in the Western tradition. There he learned technical skills and, through the Zaria Arts Society founded in 1958 with Uche Okeke as one of its leading figures, shaped his rebellious spirit and vision in this period of decolonisation (even in the arts). As a result, his output combines Christian and traditional African motifs with political overtones fustigating the former military dictatorship and the murder of the Ogoni activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and his companions in 1995 (see F. A. O. Ugiomoh and B. S. Nnamdi's 'Hanging the Ogoni Nine', focusing on the impact of this event on the art of Onobrakpeya). Other preoccupations are ecological and socio-economic. Onobrakpeya's mythical realism, as it was called, integrates Nigerian themes and beliefs. From there the artist developed a formal artistic language using the imagery of Yoruba divination bowls (*opon ifa*), but it is the Urhobo elongated forms, be it shrine figures or pillars symbolizing animals or trees, that have filled his paintings and three-dimensional mixed-media installations, which are always colourful and often heavily textured. In the catalogue, David T. Okpako has stressed the reliance on Urhobo life and myths, such as the belief in *erinvwin* (the