

# Overview

## Why Do Artists Make Prints?

From time to time in *Overview* we will try to answer some of the recurrent questions we receive about Crown Point Press and about printmaking in general.

A question frequently posed is, "Why do artists make prints?" Let me say first that at Crown Point Press we regard printmaking as a primary medium. To that end we seek to publish prints that are relevant to the total body of each artist's work. In other words, neither Crown Point Press or the artists who work here approach the medium as a means of reproduction. We specialize in etching, a medium known for its subtlety and complexity, and we encourage artists, many of whom come here without previous experience in etching, to explore the unique qualities of the medium.

Many Crown Point Press artists have talked about their personal reasons for making prints, so I thought I would let them speak for themselves.

In the catalogue from her recent exhibition of prints at The Tate Gallery in London, Pat Steir states: "I make [etchings] because it gives me a perfect way to think. I can see different aspects of making an image. It's a way to dissect my work. For me it's as direct as painting because I don't take a drawing or photograph and then translate it."

William Brice said in the interview that appears in our publication *VIEW*, "I love painting, but I've always had an involvement with line, and the quality of line in etching is unique... there is also an advantage in the sequential development of a print, the fact that you have a record of the various phases."

a challenge that "... involves a degree of simplification and abstraction... which is different from making a painting." (*VIEW*)

Elaine de Kooning compares etching, which was new to her when she came to Crown Point Press in 1985, to lithography. "In terms of sensitivity and control, I think etching is much more complex... [working in etching] was opening up other doors, and it absolutely affected my paintings." (*VIEW*)

David True likes the physical aspect of the medium. "... I have a physical relationship with the material. I'm not using a process to, in effect, illustrate an idea... It's an extraordinary process. There's a lot of suspension in printmaking... it is wonderful to be able to have a hands on physical experience to go along with this time honored process in which you work with artisans..." (*VIEW*)

For some artists like Alex Katz, print-



Tony Cragg working in the San Francisco studio.

making is an opportunity to disseminate his images to a wider audience, without resorting to reproductions that "don't give you any of the energy of the real thing." Unlike most artists we work with (perhaps he's the exception that proves the rule), Katz does not experiment spontaneously with the etching medium, but instead begins with a print in mind and makes the medium fit his purpose. As he says, "Prints are supposed to be, with my work, the final synthesis of a painting." (*Alex Katz: A Print Retrospective*, The Brooklyn Museum, 1987)

I asked Al Held, who is working in our studio at this writing, why he makes prints. He said, "It's the process of being able to change things rapidly, especially colors, and of being able to reshuffle the deck, to go

back and forth, so that I can see, side by side, several possibilities at once. That's what is most exciting to me."

According to Kathan Brown, the President and founder of Crown Point Press, the process can "shake the artist up a little," can give the artists another way of looking at their work, as well as provide them with new tools. We are always gratified that so many artists after working at Crown Point Press report that the experience has had a profound effect on subsequent work. As Francesco Clemente said in *VIEW*, "Because of the different frame and different conventions [in etching]," it led to "a new train, a new constellation of images..."

Constance Lewallen

## New Editions

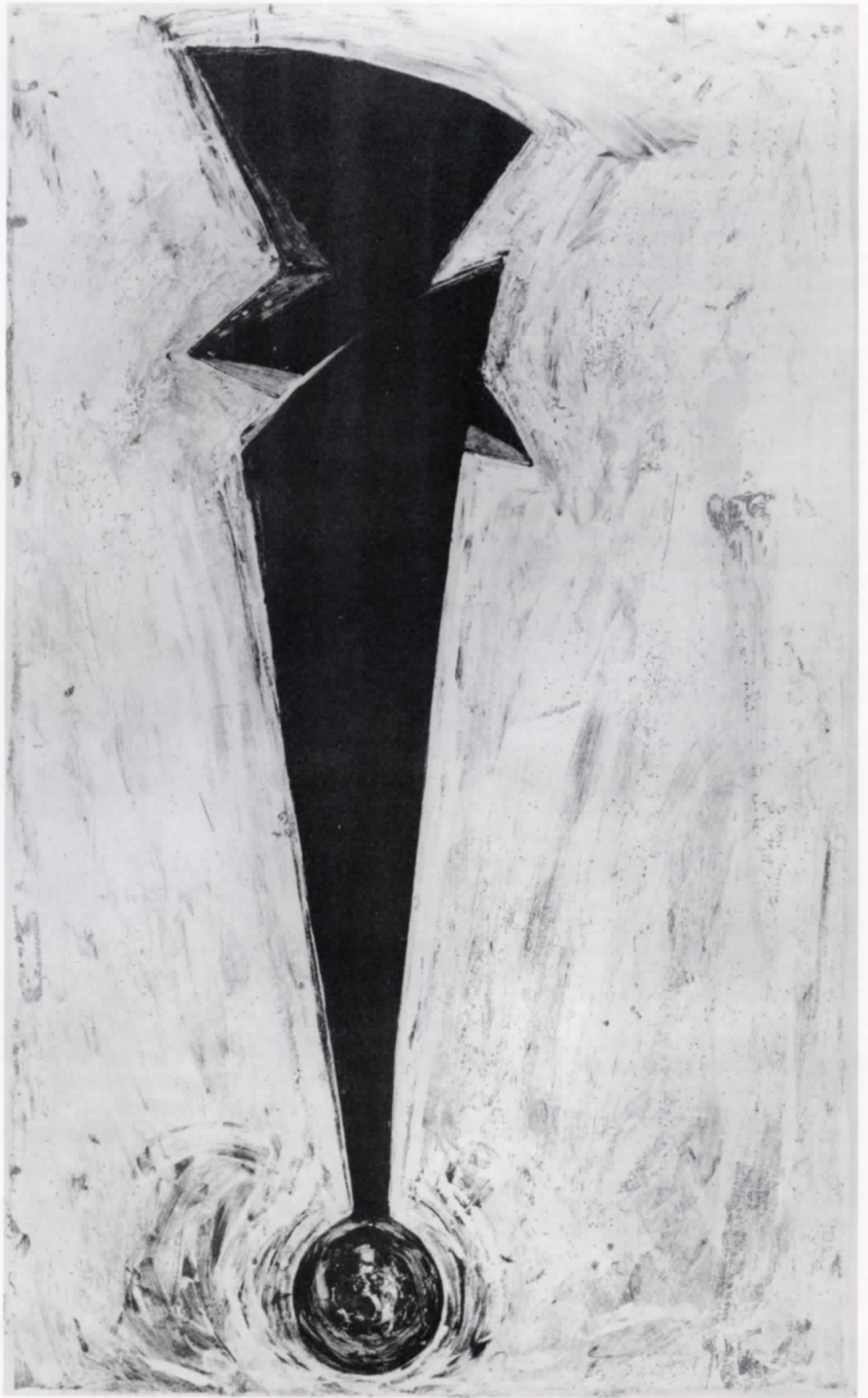
Pat Steir's *Waterfall* monoprints were exhibited recently in our San Francisco and New York galleries. Steir used the working proofs for *Waterfall* and *Waterfall Night*, two etchings released last spring, as the point of departure for this lush series. Each print is a unique interpretation of cascading water through the dynamic interplay of line and color.

Wayne Thiebaud created two new etchings: *Dark Country City*, a second state of *Country City* in blue and black, and *City Edge*, a delicate spitbite in close-valued pastel colors. Both editions are sold out at this writing.

The British sculptor Tony Cragg, who represented Great Britain in the Venice Biennale this year, worked at the press in San Francisco late in the summer. Cragg had never made etchings before but with characteristic inventiveness and energy produced an extraordinary variety of images. Many, such as *Six Bottles (State 1)* and *Figures V*, relate to his sculptural works, but others like *Landscape* appear to be new additions to his formal vocabulary. An exhibition of Cragg's etchings will take place in our New York and San Francisco galleries from January 19 to March 4, 1989, courtesy of the Marian Goodman Gallery.

Bryan Hunt participated in the Japan project in 1986, creating three woodblock prints and in November we had an opportunity to work with him in etching. Hunt produced a range of works, from landscape-related themes in the *Moon Over Mediterranean* series and *Quarry at Tuy* (both inspired by the Spanish landscape), to the sculptural *Navigator 1, 2 and 3*. We plan to exhibit Hunt's works in April and May, 1989.

Markus Lüpertz, the noted German painter and sculptor, worked with us for the first time last fall. Of the six etchings he created, two, *Pferd* (Horse) and *Monkey*, are based on line drawings of animals, and the remainder relate to human figures, although greatly abstracted in the vocabulary of Cubism.



Bryan Hunt, *Navigator 1*, 1988, soapground, aquatint, aquatint scrape and burnish, drypoint, 54 1/2 x 36", ed. 25.





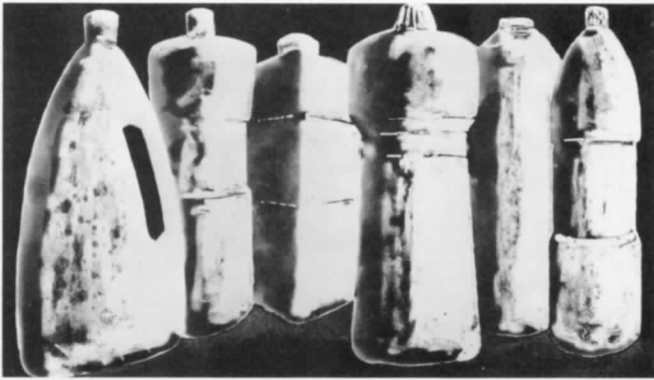
Bryan Hunt, *Vector*, 1988, soapground, aquatint, drypoint, 30 x 22 1/4", ed. 20.



Bryan Hunt, *Moon Over Mediterranean I*, 1988, soapground, aquatint, drypoint, 22 x 19", ed. 20.



Tony Cragg, *Figures V*, 1988, softground, aquatint, 19 1/8 x 15 1/2", ed. 10.



Tony Cragg, *Six Bottles (State 1)*, 1988, aquatint, spitbite,  $17\frac{1}{4} \times 22$ ", ed. 25.



Tony Cragg, *Balloon*, 1988, aquatint,  $25 \times 22$ ", ed. 35.



Markus Lüpertz, *Monkey*, 1988, sugarlift, aquatint,  $22\frac{3}{4} \times 25\frac{1}{2}$ ", ed. 25.



Markus Lüpertz, *Pilzesammler*, 1988, softground, spitbite, sugarlift,  $22\frac{3}{4} \times 25\frac{1}{2}$ ", ed. 25.



## Dear Friends,

As we enter the new year the people of Crown Point Press—the artists and the staff—are strongly in my mind. Connie Lewallen has written something about the artists in this issue of Overview; I'm going to write something about the staff.

In our staff meeting this morning I announced my intention and pleaded for help. "What shall I say?" I asked, "Give me some ideas."

"Well, you could always tell them about the orchestra," someone suggested.

"Yes, 'we play together but we rarely play in unison'."

"Or about the opera."

"Independence is encouraged, but if everyone is singing *Tosca* you shouldn't sing *The Barber of Seville*."

This exchange brought a laugh, and I realized that the staff is very familiar with these sayings of mine (which, by the way, are not original with me). Our newest employee, who has worked here only two weeks, said that right away she knew there was something different about the atmosphere in this place, and that when I gave her a copy of Peter Drucker's *The Information-Based Organization* (which I give everyone new), she started to figure out what it was.

You see, in an information-based organization there is no command authority, with flow from the top down. Instead the flow is circular, depending on who has information that is needed by someone else. "We make our own jobs," one of the office staff told

me she said to a friend. "Sounds like a mess," replied the friend. But it isn't a mess. And the reason it's not, to get back to the orchestra parallel, is that everybody knows the score.

The larger score is the value of what Crown Point Press is accomplishing—a value much more than monetary: first, that these works exist and will continue to have a life out in the world, and, second, that what goes on here influences the artists and helps them in developing their further work (see page 1), and then their work influences the work of others, and so on and so on.

The second layer of the larger score is something called the "culture" of the company—shared values, mutual respect, ways of doing things, attitudes toward work and the use of time and materials (we use them freely but purposefully). This "culture" is naturally handed to new employees by old ones, but also the staff is kept in touch with what our specific goals are, how we're doing in reaching them, how we're spending our money, the problems the company runs into and how we solve them. The staff needs to see the big picture even if day to day they don't think about it.

Day to day, individual scores dictate what each position is responsible for; there is room for improvisation—individuals make decisions on their own after getting all the information they need. People can test out their decisions on me anytime they want, but within their area the real decision is theirs, and is their responsibility. In turning to others for information we also receive support; it is information that holds us together rather than lines of authority.

As I write this it does sound a lot like the theories of Peter Drucker. I discovered Drucker four or five years ago, and through his writings found confirmation and clarification of the Crown Point Press "culture" which had, by then, already been growing 20 years or so. After the staff meeting in which I asked for help with this article, I got a real insight into this "culture" from comments from one of our printers combined with those from one of the sales staff. The printer, Nancy Anello, who has been working here almost ten years (off and on), said she remembered when the staff was 9 people, 5 of them printers. Now the staff is 25 people, 7 or them printers. There have been a lot of changes: we have Japanese and Chinese printers in those countries; the gallery in New York, where 5 people work, has been added; and, along with the studio in San Francisco, we have a large new gallery and office space with attendant increase in sales and administrative staff.

"In a way, everything has changed," Nancy said. "But in another way, nothing has. There's still the same camaraderie—for want of a better word. In the studio, in the work with artists, nothing is different at all. We focus everything on getting the work. We use as much time and materials as we need. We go out on a limb and, when we get down, something special exists because we were out there together."

"We're all in it together," Stephanie Bleacher, our Senior Sales Representative, said to me. "We have a sense of history; there is a human element; we can take time to talk with people, time for education—our

*continued on back page*

Staff photo, 1987.





## Dear Friends,



Staff photo, 1979.

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own and our clients'. One of my clients said to me the other day, 'You all obviously care so much about the art.'"

The insight for me, in putting these two remarks together, was—maybe the approach to doing things that we use in the gallery and in administration came originally out of the studio. I came out of the studio, and what I've always done is just kept on doing the next thing. Though the gallery and administrative staff now outnumber the printers, we all feel the proximity of the studio, even far away in the New York gallery, because we have a studio attitude. Each of us, in a way, works the way an artist works with us, focusing on the task at hand, working with others to get what we need in order to do it and, if possible, go beyond it.

Since our newest employee, Cam Sinclair, Gallery Assistant, had mentioned that she noticed something different about Crown Point as a workplace, I asked her to try to define it. She wrote me this note:

"The staff members are very diverse but they are willing to work efficiently 'with' one another, not authoritatively 'over' one another. Each person seems to have an awareness of their own sense of responsibility; greater flexibility and the encouraging of new ideas is allowed for. This, I find, makes for a very pleasant work environment."

It makes for a successful organization also. "The orchestra and the opera," our buzz words for working independently but together, do have a practical meaning for us.

Now, there are a few other things I want to tell you, to catch you up with what we're doing. The Eric Fischl prints have just arrived from Japan and by the time you read this they should be signed and on their way to you. Our big Tony Cragg project, 35 etchings, is just about ready also. The prints will be on exhibit in both our New York and San Francisco galleries from January 19 through March 4. Tony Cragg will be back in San Francisco to sign the prints on January 19, and we'll have a reception for him in the

gallery then.

Markus Lüpertz did five etchings, which will be on view in both our galleries March 9–April 12. We are planning a Bryan Hunt exhibition April 15–May 27, featuring 11 new etchings and some state proofs of the "Navigator" group, the largest images in the series. We are holding our new Anish Kapoor etchings and two woodblock prints from Japan by Robert Moskowitz to show at the art fair in Chicago in May. We hope also to have new work at that time by Al Held, John Cage, Shoichi Ida and William T. Wiley, all of whom are scheduled to work in San Francisco between now and May. Sometime in the spring David True will make a trip to Japan to do a woodblock print there. Our Chinese project is still in process; it's going slow, but we're starting to get work, which we will release sometime next year. I took Pat Steir to China in November, and two prints of hers are in process.

I want to let you know, also, that Stephanie Bleacher has begun traveling on our behalf. If you have a gallery or other art group that would be interested in having her bring some prints and make a presentation about the work that Crown Point Press does, please contact her at our San Francisco gallery. She went in October to the Greg Kucera Gallery in Seattle, and in December to Jan Pierce, Inc., in Ft. Worth, Texas. She is scheduled to be at the Opus Gallery in Coral Gables, Florida, on January 13; the Elizabeth Leach Gallery in Portland, Oregon, on February 3; and the Alice Simsar Gallery in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on March 10. (If you want to attend one of these talks, check with the gallery.)

Please let me know if you have any thoughts about what we're doing, good or bad. I appreciated very much getting a few notes about my last "Dear Friends" letter.

All best regards,

Kathan Brown  
President, Crown Point Press

## VIEW

We are pleased to announce we have completed two new issues of VIEW: Tony Cragg and Robert Moskowitz, the first two issues of Volume VI.

The current and past issues available now are listed below. These can be purchased individually or as a boxed set from our New York and San Francisco galleries or by mail from San Francisco. The price of individual issues is \$6 and volumes \$27; (outside the U.S. \$7 and \$30). These prices include postage. California residents add 6.5% sales tax. To order please send your request, along with payment, to: VIEW, Crown Point Press, 871 Folsom Street, San Francisco, CA 94107. Please write us for resale information and for a complete listing of our publications.

Please note that we are sold out of the Brice Marden issue, so Volume III is now priced at \$23 for the boxed set of five, \$26 for shipping outside the United States.

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John Cage  
Howard Fried  
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Robert Moskowitz

### Overview

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