SYMBOLS OF CHANGE:
British Prints of the Last Two Decades
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Leslie Arduser
Srowned Brahman
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Margaret Chalmers, "Michael Sokol"
Deborah Freeman
Louis Fritz

Selwyn Garraway
Patricia Gould, editor
Karen Novak
Carol Tyler
Velvet Wildermuth

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SYMBOLS OF CHANGE:
British Prints of the Last Two Decades from the Syracuse University Art Collections.

As the 1960s brought social and artistic upheaval to both sides of the Atlantic, the effect upon British culture was evident. Its young people became increasingly disillusioned with the inequalities and impersonal nature of the established power structure, paralleling the social revolution that occurred in the United States. The mass media emphasised the public protest enacted by groups who confronted issues of great emotion. The majority of protesters were young adults, products of the postwar population explosion, who rallied in support of their new heroes and questioned prevailing ideologies. This cultural revolution was a time when all social values were reappraised, especially the traditional modes of sexual conduct and expression. It was also a time when world-wide political opposition was exposed and when American media played a central role in highlighting radical ideas.

British artists of the 1960s and 1970s were intrigued with American culture, which represented the epitome of technological advancement. As Britain was bombarded with visual stimuli from the United States, the traditional modes of expression were challenged. This led to a revitalisation of printmaking as a viable and powerful art form. The art market in Europe and America was expanding as a newly affluent younger generation yearned to obtain quality artwork, sought prints as an affordable alternative to paintings and sculpture. Galleries and printing studios were realizing the print’s potential as a saleable commodity and supported talented artists.

For the most part these artists’ ideas translated easily into prints, yet many artists had to take an active approach in developing the medium to suit their creative expressions. Often, these artists lacked the skills necessary to achieve the printed images they desired; they needed the technical expertise only printing studios could provide. By collaborating with the master printer of a professional studio, an artist with limited knowledge of advanced methods could utilize the new technologies available, often presenting major challenges to the master printer. The results of these collaborations offered new freedoms in creativity, the printer’s technical ability, the artist’s approach, and the symbiotic relationship that developed between them.

Two printing studios, initially significant in the development of modern printmaking in Britain, were the Kelpra Studio (a commercial screen printer who began collaborating with artists in the early 1960s by Christopher Prater, a commercial screen printer who began collaborating with artists in the early 1960s) and the Curwen Studio. Curwen Press, established in the 1840s, had a long history of working with artists, principally through the lithographic printing of book illustrations. In 1958, Robert Erskine encouraged Timothy Simón and Stanley Jones to establish a separate studio at Curwen Press, specifically designed for artists to make their own lithographs. The Kelpra Studio was established in the early 1960s by Christopher Prater, a commercial screen printer who began collaborating on fine art prints with artists such as Gordon House, Richard Hamilton, Richard Pousette-Dart, and R.B. Kitaj. By commissioning prints for public sale, publishing houses and galleries also sided in the print’s popularity. St. George’s Gallery, founded by Robert Ruskine in 1954, was absorbed into Editions Alecto in 1963 under the direction of Michael Dennis and Paul Cornwell-Jones. Editions Alecto, founded in 1963 under the direction of Michael Dennis and Paul Cornwell-Jones, cultivated the ready-made, exhibiting works that artists could experiment with intaglio, lithography, and serigraph. Many of the artists were beginning to utilize popular imagery based on advertising styles, realizing that advertising had developed into a highly sophisticated art form in its own right with a complex language of signs and symbols. Ironically, several artistic interpretations illustrated in these prints were subsequently borrowed by the advertising industry.

In addition to exploiting advertising styles, many of these artists assembled ready-made images abstracted from the media, utilizing traditional methods as well as the most recent innovations. In light of this wholesale interpolation of popular ready-made imagery, the movement came to be known as neo-dada or, more commonly, pop art. Recalling the bizarre juxtaposition of dada and surrealist artists Kurt Schwitters, Max Ernst, and Marcel Duchamp, pop art flourished as a commercialized style which typified a youthful generation immersed in material culture. The pop movement sought its inspiration in the mysteries of Nature, but in the cliches of manufactured goods available to the broad public.

The images ranged from political heroes of the New Left to advertisements for the latest conveniences in the home and the blatant amplification of sexual vitality which reflected the exploitation by manufacturers determined to sell their products. "The juxtaposition of repetitions of cliches...in the food advertisements and printed circuit boards, addressed an age of rapidly advancing social and economic mobility. A pivotal figure in the emergence of new aesthetic ideals was Eduardo Paolozzi, whose primary medium was sculpture. In the late 1940s he began to create collages composed of popular imagery which he showcased at an informal slide lecture to the first meeting of the Independent Group in London in 1952. The I.G. was an organization formed for younger British artists under the auspices of the Institute of Contemporary Art. At this presentation, Paolozzi suggested that a combination of multi-media images had aesthetic significance and that..."true art was to be found outside the art galler[y]..." his ideas became the basis of the dada tradition.

The beauty he saw in such manufactured items as wheels, jets, engines, and machinery parts was translated into his machine-like sculptures, and appears to emanate from his print Turkish Menh, a print which he saw in such manufactured items as wheels, jets, engines, and machinery parts. By uniting ready-made images into highly sophisticated serigraphs and photo-lithographs, Paolozzi’s art branched away from its dada roots, while it retained the impact typical of this movement. Much of his inspiration came from his fascination with American popular culture, its comic strips, its advertising, its advertising, and its comic books. His influence on the United States, he preferred to visit Stanford University’s nuclear reactor, Hollywood film studios, and Disneyland rather than art museums. Paolozzi’s montages, incorporating advertisements, dehumanized forms, and cartoon figures, characterized his development from dada to pop, and place him as an innovator on the British art scene of the 1960s.

In 1957, Richard Hamilton, whose insightful writing influenced the ascended of pop, defined pop art as "popular, transient, expendable, low cost, mass produced, young, witty, sexy, gimmicky, glamorous, and big business." Knowing the extent an industrial designer imbued his work with an orderly, disciplined approach. His diligence in pursuing minute details and specializing the completion of his prints resulted in high quality works that reflect precise translations of his original concepts. Influenced by the slick, glossy style of American advertising, he meticulously chose a variety of elements for his compositions and analyzed the individual implications in relation to the overall scheme. Refusing the symbolism woven into the fabric of the work, Hamilton challenges the viewer to discern the meaning of images removed from their original contexts, and in so doing conveys a sense of humor and irony.

Hamilton's operations focus on the products of technology, to which his band is subservient. "I am Dreaming of a Black Christmas, a print that uses a film cell extracted from a motion picture, is a product of the film medium and an expression of cultural mass media. As a print that incorporates the precepts of pop art, it is also an outstanding example of the application of the readymade, and illustrates Hamilton's close study of the extraordinary strategies of Marcel Duchamp. The isolated forms, severed from their original contexts, are presented to the viewer in a surreal manner, exposing the public to a timely vision of the world, by elevating elements of mass media to the level of fine art. "Ultimately, Hamilton strives to widen our awareness of how we ourselves are processed by media, how we are shaped emotionally and, in turn, by the unexpected and varied forms of modern representation."
As with many pop artists of the 1960s, Joe Tilson's visualizations derived directly from the socio-political images that exploded in the media. Themes of war, youth, cult heroes, and sexuality were his inspirations, and he took great interest in new artistic techniques to allow him greater flexibility. Primarily a sculptor and painter, Tilson began in the early 1960s to use printmaking, especially serigraphy, to reveal his visions of modern society. He, like other artists of this period, had begun to accept printmaking as a serious artistic medium. The composition, He, She, and It, which incorporates sexually oriented depictions of women with poems relating male fantasies, addresses the multi-faceted relationship between men, women, and sex. His continued use of sculpture is evident in A.E.L.O.U., a wood relief and screen print which exposes on a novel conception of English vowels as feminine components. The transparency of Che Guevara, October 9, 1967, abstracted from a newspaper image of the slain revolutionary, is subsequently perpetuated by its execution on acrylic relief to impart a hauntatory imagery to the event. In photographs! printed words, and drawings! judgments. The influence of Kitaj's esoteric, literary approach can be seen in works by David Hockney, a friend and classmate of Kitaj at the Royal College of Art in London. He accomplished painter and draftsman, Hockney ventured into printmaking in 1962, producing a series of etchings entitled The Rake's Progress, inspired by his first encounter with New York City. He chose to work in the more traditional printing techniques of etching and lithography. The similarity between his prints and his drawings is embodied in the print An Etching and a Lithograph. In this work, a sublime combination of representational subject matter and the printed media is conveyed through the imagery of the Vietnamese from poverty and hunger. This transformation is accomplished through the symbolic application of the wooden fish and a photograph of Ho Chi Minh with smiling children that conveys the intimacy of a family snapshot. In his prints, Tilson has employed limited means made into an art form that stimulates our social awareness and invites us to reevaluate prevailing judgments. Influenced by Paolozzi and Chris Prater, the painter R.B. Kitaj began making prints in 1962, principally using serigraphy until 1975. His prints display a wealth of artistic and literary references with a diversity of poetic and visual solutions. This slightly different visual approach to concrete poetry integrates words and imagery to project a word-pictures ....20 Such is the intent of concretes, and thereby creates the association of the American dream with material wealth. Fur­nival states of his literary approach, "I use language scientifically in my drawings, to add further to the form of imagery, literally to make word-pictures ...."21 Such is the intent of concrete poetry. Furnival's manipulation of the image, which impels the viewer to perceive it in a new light, places him among the more politically-critical pop artists. Since many pop artists produced portfolios and books in addition to individual prints, it is fitting to include a sample of such work by Tom Phillips. In A Humument [A Treated Victorian Novel], Phillips has painted out all but a few words on each page of an existing novel and has arrived at poetry through a process of subtraction, using chance systems, rhythms, and clues from within the original work. The title of his work is derived from the original title, A Human Document, after the deletion of certain letters.22 Shapes and colors vary from page to page and are meant to be interpreted individually as well as collectively. For Phillips, the original novel became an inexhaustible source of inspiration offering a diversity of poetic and visual solutions. A slightly different visual approach to concrete poetry is seen in works of Patrick Hughes, known for his paintings, which also found that serigraphy suited his aesthetic explorations, reflecting his satirical criticism of society. Further­more, his prints exhibit the same bright, clearly defined shapes closely associated with poster, magazine, and billboard advertising. These were readily understood by the masses and could offset the prevalence of elitist art.23 Although his expressions stem from a realist hypothesis, the perfect vehicle for inviting viewers of all backgrounds to join in his lampoon of humanity and its art. In this respect, Hughes follows an existential approach more than other pop artists.24 His use of visual puns, in a fashion descended from the dada and surrealist movements, is the "truly subversive and satirical criticism of society. Further­more, Hughes' use of banal cliches! which at first seem so superficial that they are either taken for granted or overlooked entirely, Because of the special regard he imparts to his subjects, they draw attention to themselves (see Vase on Display) in a manner that compels the viewer to recognize the authoritative presence, regardless of their familiarity. Similar to Caufield's bold style is the work of Patrick Hughes, known for his paintings, which also found that serigraphy suited his aesthetic explorations, reflecting his satirical criticism of society. Further­more, his prints exhibit the same bright, clearly defined shapes closely associated with poster, magazine, and billboard advertising. These were readily understood by the masses and could offset the prevalence of elitist art.23 Although his expressions stem from a realist hypothesis, the perfect vehicle for inviting viewers of all backgrounds to join in his lampoon of humanity and its art. 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Art are satirical musings on the established perceptions of art and space. Much of the success of his motifs rests upon the pro-

liferation of the object in contemporary art, particularly on historical landmarks. His use of architectural and religion have greatly in-

high-contrast black and white photograph is similar to the prints by the British government.' '27 Although this era, with its expanding audience; has seen printmaking emerge as a powerful means to explore these roles further for artists such as Josef Albers, Philip Guston, Rico Lebrun, and Louise Nevelson to train in the lithographic process. Brittain

Man was the measure of the Universe, but rather to an age in which the media presents automations lacking in identity and meaning. Pulp art did more than merely reproduce 'popular' images, it transformed them into an art of ultimate sophistication. By exploring a level of reality existing beneath the glossy facade of American life, they (pulp artists) have attempted to challenge many of our assumptions, underscored the unique shapes and colors of the everyday world, explored the psychological overtones of visual cliches, and in the process, affected our way of looking at the world around us.26 For us to experience the roots of cultural revolution—transformed by the media and interpreted by British pop artists—to is to look to the re-

pulp art, its imagery, and in the process, affected our way of looking at the world around us.26 For us to experience the roots of cultural revolution—transformed by the media and interpreted by British pop artists—to look to the recent past and draw from it new insights.

The last two decades have proven to be a time of radical social change reflected in the arts. This era, with its expanding audience, has seen printmaking emerges as a powerful means to explore these roles further for artists such as Josef Albers, Philip Guston, Rico Lebrun, and Louise Nevelson to train in the lithographic process. Brittain

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12 It is not unusual for Hamilton to travel across foreign provinces would slyly place a wooden fish in their bowl of rice to appear wealthier by increasing the amount of food in their bowls. These fish would be soaked in the juice of the completed meal and they could suck on it and gain added nourishment from it upon departure.


14 Ibid., p. 5. This is reminiscent of Marshall McLuhan's Mediated Message is the Medium.

15 North Vietnamese peasants travelling in foreign provinces would skewy place a wooden fish in their bowl of rice to appear wealthier by increasing the amount of food in their bowls. These fish would be soaked in the juice of the completed meal and they could suck on it and gain added nourishment from it upon departure.

Marlborough New London Gallery, Pages for...


Syracuse University Art Galleries

John Furnival
Sheet size: 53.75 x 97.5, 93/150. Signed, in pencil LR.

Ian Hamilton Finlay

John Furnival
Gift of Avarim Dorman.
Sheet size: 90.9 x 54, 50/100. Signed, in pencil LR. Printed at Editions Alecto. Published by Marlborough Graphics. Gift of Milton F. Campbell.

Richard Hamilton

David Hockney

Eduardo Paolozzi


R. B. Kitaj

Ian Hamilton Finlay

David Hockney

Motorcycle
funny game

Ezra Pound

Eduardo Paolozzi

David Hockney

Eduardo Paolozzi
Peter Phillips

Gravy for the Navy, 1968-75
Serigraph
Sheet size: 72.8 x 102.1, 49/75
Signed, in pencil LR
Gift of Joseph Jurist
SU 80.138

Six Times Eight, Dreaming, 1974
Collotype
Sheet size: 101.5 x 71.8, 49/75
Signed, in pencil LR
Gift of Joseph Jurist
SU 80.139

Hunter, 1975
Serigraph
Sheet size: 102 x 72.9, 43/75
Signed, in pencil LR
Gift of Joseph Jurist
SU 80.104

Tom Phillips

Tom Phillips—A Humument, 1977
U-matic color video tape
50 minutes
Directed by David Rowan
Produced by Margaret Williams, Arbor Films
Gift of Barbara T. Herpin
SU 81.98

Color offset lithography
Sheet size: 18.1 x 13.2 Reproduced signature on colophon page Printed and bound by Skib and Mayer, Stuttgart, Germany Published by Thames and Hudson, Ltd., London
Gift of Barbara T. Herpin
SU 81.97

John Piper

Dyfryn Church, 1966
Serigraph
Sheet size: 81.92 x 59.69, 71/75 Signed, in pencil LR Gift of Steven Sohacki
SU 79.170

Newgate Church, 1966
Serigraph
Sheet size: 81.92 x 59.39, 56/75 Signed, in pencil LR Gift of Steven Sohacki
SU 79.171

Swansea Chapel, 1966
Serigraph
Sheet size: 81.28 x 59.69, 71/75 Signed, in pencil LR Gift of Steven Sohacki
SU 79.167

Joe Tilson

Bela Lugosi III, 1969
Serigraph
Sheet size: 81 x 59.5, 66/150 Signed, in pencil UR Gift of Steven Sohacki
SU 79.168

Transparency, Che Guevara, October 9th, 1967, 1969 Screen print on acrylic and cellulose on wood relief 30 x 30 x 2.5, 17/20 Signed, in marking pen on verso Gift of Steven Sohacki
SU 79.169

Ho Chi Minh, 1970
Serigraph and collage
Sheet size: 103.2 x 70.5, 50/70 Signed, in pencil UR Printing at Kelpra Studios Gift of Steven Sohacki
SU 79.190