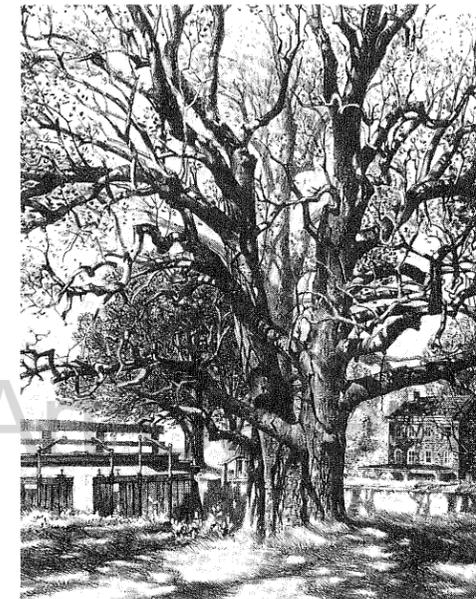


School of Art
College of Visual and Performing Arts
Syracuse University

COLLABORATIVE AMERICAN PRINTMAKING

Stow Wengenroth
Spring Morning, 1949
Lithograph
Printed by George C. Miller
Syracuse University Art Collection, 75.28



November 22, 1987
through
January 10, 1988

A precise definition of what is meant by “collaboration” is difficult to determine when referring to American printmaking. In general, the term has come to represent the myriad circumstances in which persons other than the artist have assisted in the making of the artist’s prints. A collaboration consists of the interaction between an artist, who is also referred to as the printmaker, and a printer. Typically, the efforts of the artist and printer complement rather than duplicate one another. The artist develops the idea and creates the image on the plate, stone, block, paper, or screen; the image is printed by the printer.

“Collaborative American Printmaking” is not meant to overlook, and thus diminish, the importance of those artists who have assumed total responsibility for the making of their prints—but rather to explore the various contexts in which American artists have made prints and thereby portray how an art form has evolved. While many printmakers have successfully printed their own proofs and editions, others have sought the skills of a professional printer for a variety of reasons. Most printmakers have an interest in other art media as well, and have been unable or have chosen not to devote the time necessary to master the often complex technical demands of the printmaking processes. The collaborative workshop has also freed many artists from having to devote scarce financial resources and studio space to the purchase and maintenance of printmaking equipment. A printmaker may be sufficiently competent to pull individual proofs of an image, yet lack the skill necessary to print a large edition, maintaining a consistently high quality. Some processes are more problematic than others and warrant a higher incidence of collaboration. Lithography, in particular, is a relatively complicated and volatile process which utilizes notoriously heavy stones and cumbersome presses.

The prevalence of collaboration in contemporary American printmaking is well recognized. Many exhibitions of the past twenty years have been devoted exclusively to prints created at a particular collaborative workshop or group of workshops. Since 1960, it has become standard practice for prints created in a collaborative workshop to carry the chop mark of

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that workshop as well as that of the master printer who contributed to its making. Also, it is becoming more routine to acknowledge the printer or workshop as well as the artist when exhibiting prints.

Prior to this time, however, prints normally carried no evidence that a printer, as distinct from the printmaker, may have been involved in the process. The printer remained relatively unknown to all but the artists with whom he worked or those who held a marked interest in printmaking. Although printmaking has been relegated to the category of a minor art, at least until the recent past, it may not have been practiced to any serious extent if professional printers had not provided the artists with the equipment, space, expertise and encouragement to do so. The prevailing attitude seems to have been to de-emphasize the role of printer, and this has obscured the fact that American printmaking has been, to a significant extent, a collaborative art, since its adoption as an independent fine art in the mid-nineteenth century.

The intaglio processes such as etching, drypoint, aquatint, and engraving dominated the interest of those American artists who engaged in printmaking from the 1850s into the 1930s. The adoption of intaglio printmaking by American artists in the latter half of the nineteenth century constituted the advent of printmaking as an independent fine art in the United States. Popularly known as the "Etching Revival," this movement closely followed precedents established in France and England. The American painters were following their European counterparts by undertaking intaglio printmaking as a serious part of their work. The artists were attracted by the expressive potential of the media, and applied this to original subject matter, no longer confined to creating reproductions and commercial illustrations through engraving and chromolithography. Intimately linked to the intaglio movements of all three countries were the printers, who adjusted their printing techniques to suit the desires of the individual printmakers.

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) may be considered the first prominent exponent of modern American printmaking. Through Whistler, concrete ties were established between the French, English and American print movements, though it must be acknowledged that this expatriate's impact on the artists of his homeland was primarily inspirational. His connection to the French and English movements was evidenced by close associations with the foremost collaborative printers of those countries. Whistler worked intimately with Auguste Delâtre (1822–1907), a prominent intaglio printer of Paris, and with Frederick Goulding (1842–1909), who held a comparable position in London.

Whistler learned the printer's art in depth from Delâtre—especially how to ink and wipe the plate so as to achieve the optimum beauty inherent in the etched composition. Whistler ascertained that vast differences in appearance could be achieved depending on how much ink, or plate tone, was left on the surface of the copper plate. Depending on how and with what the plate was wiped, shadows and highlights could be created independent of or corresponding to the lines etched into the plate. Delâtre demonstrated that there were various alternatives to the summarily wiped plate characteristic of commercial intaglio printing. Delâtre was a highly influential printer, whose artistic printing techniques were emulated by both print-

makers and other printers.

There were apparently no collaborative printers in the United States comparable to Delâtre during the 1860s and 1870s. It was necessary for American printmakers to print their own work, and they had begun to acquire presses for this purpose by the latter 1870s. Even though American artists who travelled to Europe often took advantage of making prints with the master printers of France and England, their numbers were probably too few and the demand for their prints too limited to sustain a full-time collaborative printer in the United States. When Sylvester Rosa Koehler (1837–1900) undertook to popularize the work of the American intaglio printmakers in 1879 by the inclusion of original prints in his newly founded *American Art Review*, a printer knowledgeable of artistic printing techniques was unavailable. The commission to print the large editions for the *American Art Review* went to the commercial printing firm, Kimmel and Voigt, located in New York City. This firm was experienced in the printing of engravings and lithographs, but was unfamiliar with the special techniques of artistic printing. It was necessary for Koehler to instruct Voigt as to the printing effects he desired. The firm of Kimmel and Voigt subsequently printed for the New York Etching Club during the 1880s and most of those printmakers whose work appeared in the *American Art Review* returned to this firm to have their plates printed throughout the period.

Other collaborative plate printers had begun to undertake the printing of artists' intaglio plates by the early to mid-1880s. Peter J. Platt (1859–1934) was probably the most sought-after collaborative intaglio printer in New York City for some fifty years, while two brothers, Gustave and Richard Peters, served printmakers for a comparable span of time at their shop in Philadelphia, until their deaths in 1925. In these men, American intaglio printmakers found printers perhaps to rival the best of those of Europe. They provided a continuity of fine art printing that spanned generations of American artists.

Peter J. Platt learned intaglio printing from his father, a mezzotint printer of the Civil War era. The younger Platt printed with artists from all over the United States, in addition to those residing in New York City. These artists represented several generations and stylistic sympathies. Platt was available to give advice or service as needed, from instructing the novice in the basic process of etching or drypoint to providing the space and equipment for the experienced printmaker to work independently if desired. On any given day, several artists were likely to appear at Platt's studio, located at 23 East 14th Street, to draw on plates and have prints pulled. Although other collaborative intaglio printers were available in New York City, apparently none were as accomplished as Peter J. Platt. The service he provided, until his death in 1934, was important to the development of modern American intaglio printmaking.

The rising popularity of lithography in the 1920s and 1930s constituted a dramatic development in American art. Lithography had remained virtually unexplored by American artists during the first two decades of this century; and as one of the few artists to create lithographs during this period, Joseph Pennell found it necessary to engage a commercial firm, the Ketterlinus Lithographic Company of Philadelphia, to print his transfer lithographs. The desire of several artists to investigate the artistic merits of the medium, led to the search for a skilled

the University of South Florida in Tampa. Donn Steward became printer of both lithography and intaglio at U.L.A.E., and Serge Lozingot has served as head printer at Gemini G.E.L. of Los Angeles since 1975. Several have founded workshops of their own: Jean Milant founded Cirrus Editions in Los Angeles in 1970; and Jack Lemon established Landfall Press in Chicago also in 1970. Tamarind's most influential offspring, however, was Kenneth Tyler who trained as a master printer there between June 1963 and July 1964, and served as its technical director in 1964–65.

Kenneth Tyler established what was probably the first second-generation collaborative print workshop of the contemporary period when he formed Gemini Ltd. in Los Angeles in 1965. The following year he was joined by two partners, Sidney Felsen and Stanley Grinstein and the name was changed to Gemini G.E.L. (Graphic Editions Limited). Tyler directed Gemini G.E.L. and was its main collaborator from 1966 to 1973, the year he left to form Tyler Graphics in Bedford Village, New York.

Essentially due to Tyler's direction, Gemini G.E.L. and Tyler Graphics have been recognized for emphasizing the technical possibilities of printmaking while utilizing both traditional and innovative methods. Though lithography has been the dominant medium at both workshops, each could offer the artist a wide range of graphic media to choose from; each printer generally having the ability to print more than one medium. Tyler's aggressive orientation toward research and development was first evident at Gemini G.E.L. Prints produced there were renowned for their technical finesse. A great innovation was the increased scale characteristic of many of the prints, which could now rival painting and sculpture in their physical dimensions. The operation grew and developed according to the needs of the artists, innovations being the results of problem-solving on the part of Tyler and his staff.

American printmaking has flourished and matured during the past twenty-seven years as the aesthetic and technical parameters have been dramatically expanded. More artists than ever before engage in printmaking seriously and regard the print media to be vehicles well-suited to the exploration of their ideas. The thrust of this renaissance in printmaking has come from the professional collaborative workshops where the printmaker/artist works closely with the master printer in the making of intaglio prints, lithographs, woodblock prints, serigraphs, and handmade paper. There is probably no single definition of a typical collaborative workshop today. While one may consist of a lone master printer specializing in a particular medium—in another, an individual may serve as master printer, workshop director, and publisher with a staff of printers and assistants working under her or his direction. Although collaborative attitudes may vary as well, generally the printer and printmaker understand that their efforts complement one another, their talents converge. The vitality of this contemporary printworld is evidence of the printmaking media's effectiveness as a vehicle for contemporary thought and visual aesthetics.

Larry David Perkins
Guest Curator
Registrar, Lowe Art Gallery

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printer who had mastered the subtleties of the demanding process. The eventual acceptance and growth of lithography was dependent, from the beginning, upon a symbiotic relationship between the artist/lithographer and the printer. This burgeoning interest in lithography was encouraged significantly by the efforts of two printers, Bolton Brown and George Miller, and the artists with whom they worked in the late 1910s and 1920s.

Bolton Brown (1865–1936) may have done more to promote the early development of lithography as a fine art in the United States than any other individual. An artist as well as a printer, Brown considered the printer a full collaborator in both technical and aesthetic matters. His first and most enduring collaborative relationship was with George Bellows. Although Brown's collaborative workshop, located at 32 Greene Street in New York City, was relatively short-lived, he nonetheless served as a distinguished enthusiast for the medium. He furthered the cause of artistic lithography through numerous lectures, demonstrations and writings, and by teaching other artists to master the process. *Lithography for Artists*, written by Brown, was published in 1930 by the Chicago Art Institute. This book was a detailed manual that gave instructions on how to proceed to create a fine lithograph.

George Miller (1894–1965) had trained at the American Lithographic Company, a commercial firm in New York City. In 1917, Miller gave up his commercial job to print solely for artists, making his lithography workshop at 6 East 14th Street the first of its kind in the United States. During the following decades he would print for literally hundreds of artists. Miller encouraged the artist to be involved with the printing process as much as possible. The printmaker generally came to the printer's studio to make his or her drawing on stone, then stood by while Miller and his assistant printed proofs of the image from the stone. If alterations in the image were desired, Miller could suggest ways to accomplish these. The skill to make such changes belong only to a highly skilled craftsman. His ability and knowledge of the process went far beyond what a given artist could master. Although Miller perceived his role as that of a catalyst in the process, there are indications that the printer was called upon occasionally to be involved with aesthetic issues as well. And given his popularity as a printer, it does not seem unreasonable to assume that in a collective sense Miller affected the appearance of American lithography for several decades.

Lithography was supported sporadically by artists

and printers in several locations across the United States from the 1920s well into the 1950s. At the Art Students League of New York, printmaker/printers such as Charles Locke, Grant Arnold, Will Barnet, and Robert Blackburn, collaborated with faculty members and students. Arnold subsequently became resident lithographic printer to the Woodstock artist colony in the early 1930s. Other collaborative lithographic printers in the United States included Theodore Cuno in Philadelphia, Francis Chapin and Max Kahn in Chicago, Lawrence Barrett in Colorado Springs, S. Dale Phillips in Ames, Iowa, and Lynton Kistler in Los Angeles. Although many printmakers may have gained a thorough knowledge of lithographic printing procedures, it seems apparent that they continued to respect the superior abilities of the collaborative printer.

The establishment, in August, 1935, of a Graphic Arts Division within the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project created a unique opportunity for collaborative printmaking. The relationship could extend beyond the printmakers and printers to include technical advisors, supervisors and administrators. The printmaking workshops not only provided work relief for artists; they also created an atmosphere conducive to experimentation in print media and made thousands of prints available to the public. The graphic art workshops accelerated changes that were taking place in American printmaking.

There were sixteen workshops established in nine states, the largest being that located in New York City. Perhaps the most tangible contribution of the New York City workshop was the implementation and exploration of color printing techniques including color lithography, color intaglio and color block printing. All these processes, however, were relatively complicated techniques requiring a great deal of supervision, instruction and the presence of professional printers. Printmakers would probably not have worked extensively in color if the project had not provided the equipment, financial support, and the printers to do so.

The dramatic transformation of intaglio printmaking in the United States in the 1940s was due to the influence of the Englishman, Stanley William Hayter, who moved his innovative printmaking workshop, Atelier 17, from Paris to New York City in 1940. Hayter brought with him not only contemporary European aesthetics and an expanded repertoire of intaglio processes, but also a unique collaborative concept. Copper engraving was the most celebrated technique at Atelier 17, allied with the full-range of intaglio processes including etching,



Jim Dine
Fourteen Color Woodcut Bathrobe, 1982
Color woodcut
Printed by Garner Tullis at Experimental Printmaking
Syracuse University Art Collection, 83.1

mezzotint, aquatint, drypoint, softground and liftground. The possibilities were limited only by the printmaker's imagination and skill. Participation at Atelier 17 demanded the total involvement of the individual in every aspect of printmaking while it encouraged interdependence. Each artist was responsible for printing his or her own plates but was often assisted by another artist. Hayter felt that the mutual assistance of artists was far superior to the printmaker/printer relationships that had dominated collaborative printmaking in both Europe and the United States. Between 1940 and 1955, Atelier 17 attracted many American artists who had not previously engaged in printmaking. The influence of the workshop spread as former members assumed teaching positions throughout the country.

There was apparently little opportunity for the mature American artist to make prints in a collaborative environment in the later 1950s unless he or she was connected to an art school or university that offered such services. The momentum that had developed to explore the possibilities of printmaking and to establish it as a major art form in the United States was threatened with the demise of several collaborative ventures in the early to mid-1950s. Fortunately, new printmaking enterprises emerged in the early 1960s that set new standards for collaborative interaction and helped set American printmaking on a course of technical and aesthetic expansion.

Two lithographic workshops, conceived in the late 1950s and functioning in 1960, were responsible for the revival of artistic lithography in the United States. At Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles, promising and established artists were provided the opportunity to create prints while a new generation of collaborative printers was trained. Tatyana Grosman (1904–1982) coaxed prominent emerging artists from New York City to her Long Island home/studio known as Universal Limited Art Editions (U.L.A.E.). Either could have generated a renewed interest in lithography, but appearing coincidentally, they provided a particularly strong impetus.

June Wayne successfully solicited funds from the Program in Humanities and the Arts of the Ford Foundation for the creation of the Tamarind Lithography Workshop, which began functioning in June of 1960 in Los Angeles. Her concern was the possible demise of artistic lithography in the United States and the need to train a pool of collaborative master printers if this was to be avoided. A fellowship program was devised to support both printers and artists. During its first ten years of operation, the workshop awarded grants to 103 artist-fellows and 71 to printer-fellows from across the United States. The training of professional printers may arguably be the most important contribution that Tamarind made to the revival of the medium. But true to its goal as a non-profit educational organization, it was concerned with a broad range of issues related to the tools and materials of lithographic printing and to the dissemination of this information. The resulting wealth of knowledge culminated in *The Tamarind Book of Lithography: Art and Techniques*, written by Garo Antreasian and Clinton Adams. They proposed that the collaborative experience should center on the mutual respect of professional equals. While the artist should have a sound understanding of the technical process, he or she must recognize the superior technical ability of the printer. The printer, in turn, should be careful not to interject his or her aesthetic opinion unless solicited by the artist, and should

remain open to new possibilities the artist might suggest.

While Tamarind Lithography Workshop was conceived and organized by artists who possessed a relatively thorough knowledge of creating and printing lithographs, Universal Limited Art Editions was begun under markedly different circumstances. The role of Tatyana Grosman, founder of U.L.A.E., was neither that of artist or printer, but rather as publisher. By 1960, she had begun to invite artists to her home in West Islip, Long Island to make lithographs. An invitation to work at U.L.A.E. was extended to artists Grosman admired, and these artists have generally been identified as associated with the New York School. A trial-and-error, experimental attitude among the artists and printers permeated U.L.A.E. from the beginning, since the limitations of the lithographic process were not clearly understood and the artists were intent to mine the possibilities of the medium. Robert Blackburn served as U.L.A.E.'s first printer. He was an artist as well as a printer, and had learned the techniques of lithographic printing as a student assistant to Will Barnet at the Art Students League in the 1940s. Blackburn printed at U.L.A.E. for five years, beginning in 1957, and was succeeded by a host of other collaborative printers during subsequent years.

Tamarind and U.L.A.E. demonstrated that lithography could be a suitable vehicle for contemporary art imagery. Kathan Brown's Crown Point Press established a similar claim for the intaglio media, and emerged as a primary source of new intaglio printmaking in the 1970s. Crown Point Press began informally in 1962 in the basement of Brown's Berkeley, California home, but soon relocated to a studio in Oakland. Her eventual goal was to put the intaglio media to serving the contemporary artist as those processes were yet to be explored in terms of the new artistic attitudes that had surfaced in the 1960s. Brown's work with Bay Area artists in the 1960s laid the foundation for a more extensive operation that included an ever-widening group of artists and printers. She began working with a group of artists generally associated with minimal aesthetics in the early 1970s. Minimalist-oriented images proved especially difficult to print since they demanded great subtlety—slight variations become glaring infractions in art work given over to simplicity and basic structure. Artists invited to Crown Point Press by Brown in the later 1970s and the 1980s have extended the possibilities of intaglio printmaking yet further. Brown, as a printer and publisher, has not sought to extend the media technically for the sake of technical innovation alone, but in response to the artist's needs and desires.

The collective influence of Tamarind Lithography Workshop, Universal Limited Art Editions, and Crown Point Press was crucial to the burgeoning interest in printmaking evident by the early 1970s. These workshops served the purposes of training new collaborative printers, of introducing artists to the printmaking media, and of expanding the creative possibilities of the print media. Tamarind-trained printers in particular, have made enormous contributions to the renaissance of artistic lithography in the United States, as might be expected since the propagation of collaborative printers was at the core of Tamarind's mission. Many former printer-fellows have assumed positions in university art schools and printshops while others have become printers in independent workshops. Charles Ringness, for instance, became studio manager of Graphicstudio at

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AFTERWORD

We tend to read history backwards through the lens of our own experience. Because of this natural inclination, all too often we misread the past. One of the tasks of the curator is to act as an historian, analyzing the documents handed down through time, thereby helping us to gain a new, more accurate vision of distant events. When this process is done well, the curator creates an exhibition which enables us to learn, to see afresh. *Collaborative American Printmaking* is such an exhibition. The curator, Larry David Perkins, Registrar of the Lowe Gallery, has brilliantly demonstrated that the current collaborative spirit of American printmaking is both an old and a new situation. It is old because the American artist/printmaker has always had access to the master printer, but it is new because the master printer is, at long last, receiving a greater measure of recognition for his contribution. In the collaborative partnership of printmaking, the artist conceives the image, but it is up to the master printer, through his skill and knowledge, to bring that image to its fullest potential.

The exhibition *Collaborative American Printmaking* has been realized in the same collaborative spirit as the works of art themselves. It was through the able stewardship of Dr. Alfred Collette, Director of the Syracuse University Art Collection, and Mr. Domenic Iacono, Curator of the Syracuse University Art Collection, that the University came to develop an outstanding collection of American prints, and it is from this collection that the vast majority of the works in the exhibition have been drawn. Mr. Perkins enhanced this selection with prints graciously lent by George Arents Research Library for Special Collections, Syracuse University; Tyler Art Gallery, SUNY College at Oswego; Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, New York; Crown Point Press, Landfall Press, Castelli Graphics, David McKee Gallery, The Printmaking Workshop and Mr. Will Barnet all of New York City. Understanding the importance of this project, the Syracuse University Senate Committee on Research generously awarded Mr. Perkins a grant to aid him in his research and publication. Ms. Barbara Ward of the Graduate Program in Museum Studies helped Mr. Perkins with the preparation of the bibliography and checklist. Mr. Perkins' work was greatly eased through the generous assistance of Mr. David Prince, Curator of the Syracuse University Art Collection. Dean Griff, Preparator of the Syracuse University Art Collection, matted and framed the prints with the greatest care. Ms. Betty LaPlante, Office Coordinator of the Lowe Gallery, assisted in all aspects of publication preparation. We are especially grateful to C. W. Pike, Associate Professor, Department of Visual Communications, Syracuse University, for designing the brochure and checklist. Donald M. Lantzy, Dean, College of Visual and Performing Arts, and Rodger Mack, Director, School of Art, supported the exhibition throughout all its stages of development.

Dr. Edward A. Aiken
Director, The Joe and Emily Lowe Gallery