

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

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THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF CREATIVITY
AND PRINTMAKING MASTERY FROM CROWN POINT PRESS
AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, JUNE 8 - SEPTEMBER 1, 1997

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Richard Diebenkorn's first woodcut, the dramatically colored Ochre (1983); John Cage's Smoke Weather Stone Weather OK to Print (1991), for which crumpled newspaper was set on fire and extinguished on a printing press; and Chuck Close's trial proof for Keith (1972), a spectacular mezzotint, are among the innovative works in Thirty-Five Years at Crown Point Press, on view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, June 8 - September 1, 1997. The exhibition presents 122 works on paper created by 48 artists at one of the first woman-owned print publishing workshops in the world, now considered one of the leading fine art publishers.

The exhibition showcases selected works from a recent gift to the National Gallery of more than 220 prints from Crown Point Press and its founder, Kathan Brown, in January 1997. Many of these are the special "OK to Print" proofs

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annotated by the artists that act as the standards for the editions. Additional loans from The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco combine to provide an engaging view of the scope and diversity of the artists who have worked at the press between 1965 and the present.

In 1962, Brown, an artist and printer, started a community studio in the San Francisco Bay area that soon became a magnet for artists interested in etching in the 1960s and 1970s: painters and sculptors, as well as conceptual, installation, and performance artists. A selection of works from the press, ranging from minimalism and abstraction to realism, is the focus of this exhibition. In addition, woodcuts from a program that supported artists' travels to Japan and China to study traditional Eastern printmaking techniques are also on view.

Installed in six galleries, Thirty-Five Years at Crown Point Press is organized by sections: "Introductory Highlights"; "The 1970s"; "Figurative Traditions"; "Conceptual Art and Its Affinities"; "The 1990s"; and "A Tribute to Cage and Diebenkorn," the last in honor of two of Brown's most important mentors who died in 1992 and 1993, respectively. Virtually all of both artists' etchings were made at Crown Point Press.

Crown Point publications encompass a vast range of imagery and ideas, much of which can be seen in the exhibition with the figuration of William Bailey, Francesco Clemente, and William T. Wiley; the abstractions of Al Held and Sean Scully; and the conceptual work of Joel Fisher, Tom Marioni, and Tim Rollins + K.O.S. (Kids of Survival). The international flavor of the exhibition is reflected in works by such artists

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as Tony Cragg (Great Britain), Shoichi Ida and Katsura Funakoshi (Japan), Per Kirkeby (Denmark), and Christian Boltanski and Daniel Buren (France). Americans Robert Mangold, Claes Oldenburg, Judy Pfaff, Dorothea Rockburne, and Pat Steir, among others, are also represented.

Trained as an etcher, Brown studied at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London. After discovering a dismantled etching press behind a boarding house in Edinburgh, Scotland, Brown brought it back to San Francisco, where she established what would later become Crown Point Press. Founded at the start of the so-called print renaissance, Crown Point Press originated shortly after two other important presses were set up by women for lithography: Universal Limited Art Editions (U.L.A.E.) by Tatyana Grosman on Long Island (1956-1957) and Tamarind Lithography Workshop by June Wayne in Los Angeles (1960).

Crown Point Press developed from a community workshop for Brown and her friends into a distinguished printer for other publishers. Its international reputation was established in the 1970s, when Brown began printing elegant minimalist works by such artists as Sol Lewitt, Brice Marden, and Robert Ryman, which were published by Parasol Press Ltd. in New York. By the end of the 1970s, Brown had phased out printing for other publishers and was on her way to becoming one of the foremost contemporary print publishers.

After twenty years of working solely with etching, Crown Point Press sponsored a woodcut program from 1982 to 1994, which began in Kyoto, Japan, and later led

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to work in several cities in China. Examples from the Japan program on view in the exhibition are Alex Katz's The Green Cap (1985), a haunting portrait of a female swimmer; Helen Frankenthaler's mesmerizing Cedar Hill (1983); and Wayne Thiebaud's playful Candy Apples (1987). From the China program, viewers will see Robert Kushner's Red Anemone (1989), printed on silk.

The exhibition is organized by The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the National Gallery of Art. The exhibition is curated by Karin Breuer, associate curator, Achenbach Foundation for Graphics Arts, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Ruth E. Fine, curator of modern prints and drawings, National Gallery of Art; and Steven A. Nash, associate director and chief curator, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Thirty-Five Years at Crown Point Press travels to The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, its only other venue, October 4, 1997 - January 4, 1998. Accompanying the exhibition is a comprehensive catalogue with more than 200 prints in color, published by The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco in association with the University of California Press. Essays by Fine, Nash, and Breuer offer insight into the creative process of the artists, and describe the development of Crown Point Press and its place in the printmaking landscape of the twentieth century.

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The National Gallery of Art, located on Constitution Avenue between Third and Seventh Streets, N.W., is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free. For general information, call (202) 737-4215, the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at (202) 842-6176, or access the Gallery's Web site at <http://www.nga.gov>.