Contemporary American Monotypes

SELECTIONS FROM THE ANDERSON GRAPHIC ARTS COLLECTION

January 26–April 20, 2008

de Young
Anderson Gallery of Graphic Art

Fine Arts
Museums of
San Francisco
Contemporary American Monotypes

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A hybrid of painting and printmaking, the monotype was developed by seventeenth-century Italian artist Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, and a rich history was firmly established in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by such artists as William Blake, Edgar Degas, and Maurice Prendergast. Truly process-oriented, the monotype is a unique impression created by rolling, brushing, or somehow applying inks or paints to an unaltered metal or glass plate that is run through a press for a one-of-a-kind image. Embraced by painters and sculptors as well as printmakers, monotypes allow for spontaneous expression and immediate results that are not found in intaglio or relief processes. The technical freedom achieved by working independently from a master printer also permits artists to both print and publish their own monotypes. In addition, many use the process to explore sequential imagery, as the second impression, a “ghost” or “cognate,” is never a duplicate but can serve as the seed of the image to follow.

A fresh generation of printmakers, many from the Bay Area, was instrumental in reviving monotypes as a contemporary medium in the 1970s after being profoundly influenced by a 1968 exhibition of Degas monotypes at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University. Instead of mirroring the past that inspired them, these printmakers expanded the vocabulary of the monotype with complex uses of ink and technique that further developed ethereal qualities of light and painted line. Matt Phillips, an early advocate of the medium, organized monotype exhibitions of Maurice Prendergast, Milton Avery, and others, beginning in 1967.
The gestural quality of his own monotypes utilizes the medium’s signature painterly textures. Living in Boston and inspired by the Degas exhibition, Michael Mazur identified monotypes as a challenging outlet for his technical skills as both a painter and printmaker. He printed and published the 1978 monotype Pailette Still Life as part of a series that is an homage to the medium itself. Jim Dine’s Double Venus is also one from of a series of related prints, each of which he prepared as a response to the previous ghost, or cognate. Although Mary Frank works primarily as a ceramics sculptor, she has been making monotypes since 1967. In her hands, the monotype process is partly drawing and partly sculpture. Frank physically coaxes the ink on the plate, pushing it with rollers and brushes and pulling it away with rags. Like Dine and Mazur, she frequently prints plates in series, either enriching successive impressions with additional color or allowing images to pale like ghosts.

On the West Coast, Nathan Oliveira began making monotypes at Stanford University in 1969 and created a significant series based on Francisco Goya’s Tauromaquia in 1973. Soon he moved toward printing abstracted constructions, as in Site with Colored Bundle and Sled, and reintroduced expressively drawn figures. Oliveira has continued to explore monotypes throughout his career and introduced the medium to innumerable artists, including Wayne Thiebaud and Frank Lobdell. The monotypes by Thiebaud in this exhibition explore the range of gestural and tonal possibilities within structured black-and-white urban landscapes. In contrast, another innovator, the artist Joseph Egoldyne, utilized the process to produce detailed representational images with delicate line and color.
The painter Sam Francis printed *A Fixed Course of Changes #3* in 1977 at San Francisco's Experimental Workshop, a press known for its early developments with large-scale prints on thick, handmade papers. Francis also worked at 3EP, Ltd., in Palo Alto, a press formed in 1978 by Paula Kirkeby, Joseph Goldyne, and Mary Margaret Anderson. Mr. and Mrs. Anderson had been avid print collectors since the 1960s and became interested in monotypes with the help of their friend Kirkeby, whose Smith Andersen Gallery had exhibited Nathan Oliveira's monotypes in 1970 and 1973. Over five years, 3EP published the prints and monotypes of 20 artists, including David Gilhooly, Ed Moses, Miklos Pogany, Matt Phillips, and others. In 1983, the press was restructured when Putter Pence, the Andersons' daughter, joined Mrs. Anderson and relocated 3EP to Los Angeles. In 1984 Kirkeby established Smith Andersen Editions, a press in Palo Alto that continues to encourage experimentation with monotype and monoprint.

While this exhibition features monotypes from many American fine-art presses, many were either initially presented by Smith Andersen Gallery or published by 3EP, Ltd., or Smith Andersen Editions. *Contemporary American Monotypes: Selections from the Anderson Graphic Arts Collection* celebrates the contributions of Paula Kirkeby to the medium and the dedication of the Andersons to printmaking as collectors and publishers. Together we celebrate many of the medium's innovators who revitalized a print process in the 1970s that continues to intrigue artists.
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Exhibitions in the Anderson Gallery of Graphic Art at the de Young celebrate the 1996 gift of 573 American prints and 82 monotypes to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco from the collection of Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson and their daughter, Mary Patricia Anderson Pence. The Anderson Graphic Arts Collection spans nearly thirty years of print production, from 1962 to 1991, with outstanding examples of print processes—woodcut, intaglio, lithography, screenprint, and monotype—from major American fine-art presses. Since 1997 the Fine Arts Museums have provided a series of exhibitions from the collections as well as interpretive publications and programs in order to share this important educational and art historical resource with museum audiences.

The Fine Arts Museums are also dedicated to pursuing an active collection-sharing program, which makes the Anderson Graphic Arts Collection accessible as a resource to museums and galleries throughout the western United States. Individual loans, self-organized exhibitions, and exhibitions previously presented at the Fine Arts Museums are available to small and mid-size institutions at nominal cost.

Checklist of the Exhibition

Unless otherwise noted, all works are from the Anderson Graphic Arts Collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, gift of the Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson Charitable Foundation. Sheet measurements are in inches, with height preceding width.

Lee Altman
(American, b. 1945)
Window, 1980
Color monotypes, first and ghost impressions
17 x 22 in. (each)
Published by Smith Andersen Editions, Palo Alto
1996.74.18–19

Jim Dine
(American, b. 1935)
Double Venus, 1983
Color monotype
63 x 36 in.
Printed by Toby Mitchell at Angeles Press
Published by Pace Editions, New York
1996.74.104

James Ford
(American, b. 1947)
Big Red Blade, 1988
Color monotype
57 x 42 in.
Published by 3EP, Ltd., Los Angeles
1996.74.115

Sam Francis
(American, 1923–1994)
A Fixed Course of Changes #3, 1977
Color monotype with oil, watercolor, and embossing
28 1/2 x 22 1/4 in.
Printed by Will Foo with Ganter Tullis
Published by Experimental Workshop, San Francisco
1996.74.123

Mary Frank
(American, b. 1933)
Untitled (Running Figures in the Forest), 1978
Color monotype
40 x 50 in.
Published and printed by the artist
1996.74.131

Helen Frankenthaler
(American, b. 1928)
Monotype VII, 1991
Color woodblock monotype with handcoloring
42 3/4 x 33 1/2 in.
Published by Tyler Graphics, Ltd.
Collection of Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson

Joseph Goldyne
(American, b. 1942)
Wrapping It Up: McKlosky's, 1976
Color monotype
22 1/8 x 15 in.
1996.74.150

Willy Hecks
(American, b. 1951)
Knife, 1994
Color monotype with paint
35 1/2 x 33 1/4 in.
Published by Experimental Workshop, San Francisco
Collection of Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson

Willy Hecks
(American, b. 1951)
Torch, 1994
Color monotype with paint
35 1/2 x 33 1/4 in.
Published by Experimental Workshop, San Francisco
Collection of Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson

Frank Lobdell
(American, b. 1921)
Untitled #7.11.77, 1977
Color monotype
30 x 22 1/4 in.
Published by Smith Andersen Editions, Palo Alto
1996.74.275

Michael Mazur
(American, b. 1935)
Palette Still Life, 1978
Color monotype
37 3/4 x 49 3/4 in.
Printed and published by the artist
1996.74.291

Ed Moses
(American, b. 1926)
Sheard Jap, 1962
Color monotype
37 7/8 x 24 3/4 in.
Published by 3EP, Ltd., Palo Alto
1996.74.308
Ed Moses  
(American, b. 1928)  

Shard, 1982  
Color monotype  
38 1/2 x 24 3/4 in.  
Published by SEP Ltd., Palo Alto  
1996.74.309

Kenneth Noland  
(American, b. 1924)  

untitled, 1981  
Color monotype with oil paint and watercolor  
22 1/2 x 21 7/8 in.  
Published by Experimental Workshop, San Francisco  
1996.74.338

Nathan Oliveira  
(American, b. 1928)  

Site, 1977  
Color monotype  
26 1/2 x 22 in.  
Printed and published by the artist  
1996.74.371

Nathan Oliveira  
(American, b. 1928)  

Site with Colored Bundle, 1978  
Color monotype with acrylic  
29 1/4 x 22 3/8 in.  
Printed and published by the artist  
1996.74.374

Sabina Ott  
(American, b. 1955)  

Mater Rosa Series #3, 1992  
Color monotype  
39 1/2 x 30 1/4 in.  
Published by Experimental Workshop, San Francisco  
Collection of Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson

Matt Phillips  
(American, b. 1927)  

White Vase, 1977  
Color monotype  
35 1/8 x 20 in.  
1996.74.377

Mihklos Pogany  
(American, b. 1946)  

Harika, Santa Fe, NM (22), 1981  
Color monotype with pastel  
30 x 22 in.  
1996.74.392

Wayne Thiebaud  
(American, b. 1920)  

Freeway Curve, 1977  
Monotype  
22 3/8 x 29 15/16 in.  
Printed by Lee Altman  
Published by the artist  
Collection of Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson

Wayne Thiebaud  
(American, b. 1920)  

Twin Peaks Downgrade #1, 1977  
Monotype  
31 1/16 x 22 13/16 in.  
Published by the artist  
Collection of Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson

Joseph Ziker  
(American, b. 1924)  

Cosmic Entity #384, 1982  
Color monotype  
11 x 11 in.  
Published by SEP Ltd., Palo Alto  
1996.74.493

Joseph Ziker  
(American, b. 1924)  

Cosmic Entity #366, 1982  
Color monotype  
11 x 11 in.  
Published by SEP Ltd., Palo Alto  
1996.74.494

References


