

Moving Toward Multiplicity: Printmaking in Northern California—The 1940s to the Present

By Art Hazelwood

The story of the past seventy years of printmaking in Northern California is a dramatic one of new forms and new directions. With the end of World War II, the California Society of Etchers (CSE) found itself in much the same position as it had been for most of its history—it was the only organization focused on printmaking in Northern California. The Depression saw the rise of the Graphics Division of the WPA Federal Arts Project, but the WPA ended in 1942. Theoretically at least, the CSE was therefore uniquely positioned to be a leading force in the developing postwar art world.

The CSE may have been alone in representing the interests of prints and printmakers, but the print world was moving in new directions. Despite its brevity, the impact of the Depression and the WPA was profound. A new artistic ideal of printmaking had been born, and the nineteenth century Etching Revival style was no longer the focus of printmaking. The aesthetics of finely rendered landscapes was slipping away, and the medium of etching was eclipsed by lithography, relief, and increasingly by screenprint. A whole new generation of artists were exposed to printmaking and they looked to different inspirations. The enthusiasm for the etchings of the nineteenth century artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler as well as for the Arts and Crafts style were replaced with new and more contemporary influences. The Mexican muralist Diego Rivera made a profound impact beginning with his first visit to San Francisco in 1930. Other Mexican artists and European modernists were also influential throughout the 1930s and '40s.

In contrast, the CSE artists can perhaps be represented best by John Winkler. Winkler was an early member of the CSE who, in the 1920s, was heralded as one of the greatest etchers in America. His work was much sought after, his newest editions closely watched. He worked in what could be referred to as the Whistler school—fine etching, landscape and cityscape, and incredible attention to craft. But in the late 1920s and 1930s he hit a wall and found he could no longer work. Though his personal artistic block had its own sources, it dramatically symbolized the wider changes going on in printmaking and its role in society. The 1930s represented a truly monumental shift of aesthetics, of media, of politics, and of the very reasons for printmaking.ⁱ

These changes began to be noticeably felt in the 1930s, but the long period of tumult in the microcosm of Northern California lasted well into the 1970s. By that time CSE had become the California Society of Printmakers (CSP) and a large number of print publishers, workshops, college and university print departments, had sprung into existence. The CSE was not to be alone for long.

The CSE was consistently administered by Nicholas Dunphy, who was executive secretary from 1932 until his death in 1955. Dunphy was an accomplished etcher whose work also fell within the Whistler school. After his death, Elizabeth Ginno, wife of John Winkler, took the organization under her care. She was a stabilizing force for fifteen years, eventually shepherding the transition into CSP. In 1970, after one year as the third president of the new society, she stepped down from the board.

Elizabeth Ginno was employed by the WPA during the Depression, and did printmaking demonstrations at the 1939 San Francisco World's Fair exhibition, *Art in Action*, on Treasure Island. In 1940, she also created lithographs printed on the telltale Warren's Olde Style paper—a pretty clear sign that she was working at the WPA Federal Arts Project print workshop run by CSE member Ray Bertrand. Almost all San Francisco WPA prints, as well as most student work of the era, were printed on this paper. There wasn't really much lithography going on at that time that wasn't produced through Ray Bertrand.ⁱⁱ

Ray Bertrand, who had worked on the New Deal mural at Coit Tower, was the lead printer and director of the WPA Graphics Division in San Francisco. The shop served two functions. It employed commercial lithography printers laid off by the economic downturn, and it employed local artists to make art. Bertrand was also teaching lithography at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute). Bertrand's skill at printing, and the exposure that the WPA Federal Arts Project gave to many artists, are credited with the new upsurge in interest in lithography.

Through their blend of commercial printers and fine art employees, the WPA workshops around the country introduced a number of innovative applications of commercial techniques to art. In the San Francisco WPA print shop a unique coated paper was invented for use in transfer lithography. The paper was treated in order to simulate the surface of a litho stone. Transfer lithography allowed the artist to work on this paper, which could then be used to make an editioned print. As a result artists over a wide geographic area could mail in their lithographic plates and the San Francisco print shop would do the printing.ⁱⁱⁱ

Across the country the Federal Arts Project gave impetus to the more “democratic” print forms, primarily of lithography, but also of relief print and increasingly, screenprint. Etching was associated with an older style and the more arduous printing process made it seem less relevant at a time when accessibility to art was valued more than ever before.

Aside from lithography, a new technique was moving west out of New York. Originating in the early 1930s and used in the WPA Poster Unit, it made the move to the Graphics Division of the Federal Arts Project in 1938 under the tutelage of Anthony Velonis. At first called silkscreen, the name seems to have been gussied up as it made the leap from posters to fine art prints, becoming “serigraphy.” Further artistic approaches to serigraphy (now more accurately called screenprint) grew out of the Art Students League and the workshop of Harry Sternberg.^{iv} Dorr Bothwell, Marion Cunningham, Mildred Rackley, and others created screenprints in the Bay Area in the early 1940s. Bothwell went on to teach the technique at the California School of Fine Arts.

Relief prints were also transformed by the new atmosphere of the WPA as well as by two seemingly contradictory visions—the influence of Mexican art, and the revival of wood engraving as a form of artistic expression. The bold political expression of Mexican art was merged with the exceptional control of wood engraving in the hands of several Northern California artists including Adelyne Cross Ericksson and Victor Arnautoff. Many of the artists who created relief prints were ideologically and aesthetically aligned with the Mexican print artists of the Taller de Gráfica Popular (TGP), founded in 1937 in Mexico City, and tended not to be connected with the CSE. There were exceptions such as Charles Surendorf, who was both CSE board member, WPA relief print artist, and also part of the

California Labor School. Edward Hagedorn, who created large bold anti-war linocuts in the 1930s, was also a CSE board member.

In contrast to this ferment the prints seen at CSE exhibits all through the 1940s were generally etchings, and the titles suggest fairly traditional subjects. For example, associate prints selected in 1948 were a drypoint, *Barn at Belota*, by William S. Rice; etchings by Nicholas Dunphy, *Reclining Cypress*, and Cornelis Botke's *Bodega Bay*; Elizabeth Ginno's lithograph, *Windmill*; an aquatint, *The Pinto Colt*, by J. J. McVicker; and Mark Milsk's etching, *Modern Rhythm Dancer*. CSE was carrying the flag of an older time and style.

While printmaking was shifting away from the Whistler school under the new ideals brought on by the WPA and the Depression, the demise of the WPA in 1942 left a void. However, the spirit of the WPA and its democratic ideal of "art for the people" found a new home in what became an important center for the political and cultural left—the California Labor School and its spin-off print workshop, the Graphic Arts Workshop—which became the first challenge to the monopoly of CSE in the Northern California world of postwar print organizations.

The Graphic Arts Workshop (1952-to the present) arose out of the San Francisco-based Tom Mooney Labor School, which was founded in 1942. The school, which became the California Labor School in 1944, taught all manner of classes and had an art department that was nearly as large at its height as the California School of Fine Arts. The school attracted its teachers from all over the world. Pablo O'Higgins, the American born co-founder of the TGP taught there in 1945 and again in 1948. Italian-born Giacomo Patri, who created the iconic print series of the Depression with his wordless novel of linocuts, *White Collar* (1938), was head of the Art Department at the Labor School starting from 1947. Many of the artists worked in relief, although lithography and screenprint were also common. Some, such as Victor Arnautoff and CSE member Emmy Lou Packard, had close connections to Diego Rivera. The WPA tradition linking printmaking and murals was still strong and lasted long after the link was broken in other places. Anton Refregier, who painted the last WPA-funded mural in the country—at Rincon Annex in San Francisco—was assisted by Louise Gilbert.^v Both of them taught at the California Labor School, and both made screenprints.

But the vitality of this experiment among leftist artists was soon driven underground. The school, which had been quite openly communist when founded, was forced to shut down in 1957 as a result of the anti-communist policies of the Cold War. By that time, a group of printmakers had spun off to form the Graphic Arts Workshop—which has survived witch hunts and economic hardship all the way to the present.^{vi}

Much of what might be called the WPA aesthetic and its associated community aspect was rejected in the immediate postwar era. This rejection extended in much of the country to a rejection of the techniques associated with "democratic" printmaking. In San Francisco, lithography and screenprint had a longer life in the postwar era—lasting into the 1950s and subsequently taken up by the newer generation of artists.

Still, the marginalization of the printmaking approach of leftists was more than just a new generation and a new aesthetic. The anti-communist zeal of the late 1940s and '50s

intimidated many leftist artists and discouraged a new generation from making political art. Artists, among many others, became the subject of aggressive investigations and questioning. Many of the artists of the Graphic Arts Workshop were harassed by the FBI.^{vii}

The WPA style of socially engaged modernist artwork owed a debt to the Mexican artists as well as the visiting artists displaced from European war—Léger, Feininger, and Beckmann all taught at Mills College over this period. This approach and style lasted from about 1934 to 1955. It was crushed in the 1950s, partially by aesthetic, but also by political changes in the culture.

An example of how lithography was still being put to use by leftist artists well into the McCarthy era can be seen in an event in 1955. A satirical lithograph of then Vice President Richard Nixon appeared at the San Francisco Art Festival.^{viii} The print was a color lithograph by California Labor School artist, Victor Arnautoff, mural assistant of Diego Rivera, director of the Coit Tower mural project, and by then Assistant Professor of Art at Stanford University. The lithograph made only a brief appearance before being censored and removed. The image was a commentary on Nixon's role in the Alger Hiss case.^{ix}

A darker story of how leftist art was sidelined is that of Frank Rowe. Rowe was a teacher, painter and printmaker who came back from World War II a decorated combat paratrooper of the 101st Airborne Division. But he faced a further confrontation in a postwar America grown paranoid under the Red Scare. California's 1950 Levering Act required a loyalty oath of all state employees, including Rowe, who was then an art teacher at San Francisco State College (later University). He refused to sign what was in essence a practice in red-baiting. His refusal to comply led to his firing and to years of government harassment before the law was invalidated as unconstitutional in 1967.

Rowe was one of the artists who founded the Graphic Arts Workshop.^x The example of Rowe and others who stood up against the rising postwar paranoia served as a warning to others. Outspoken leftists did not survive to teach in the 1950s university system, including art departments. The exception was Victor Arnautoff who, because he was at the private Stanford University, was not subject to government employee loyalty oaths and was therefore more shielded from political attacks.

While government support for the arts died with the end of the WPA in 1942, it did take a roundabout course through the G.I. Bill. The G.I. Bill—or Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944—provided college or vocational education for returning World War II veterans as well as a year of unemployment compensation. The money coming into colleges encouraged a massive growth in the education sector, leading to an unparalleled expansion for all classes. The effect on art departments was enormous. Print departments started popping up everywhere and they needed to hire teachers. The G.I. Bill made further education and living as an artist possible for many. It could be said to have been the impetus for a whole generation of artists. And in printmaking that generation, to a large extent, embraced the philosophy of Atelier 17.

Stanley William Hayter moved his Atelier 17 to New York City from Paris in 1940 and became a major influence on a generation of printmakers. His most famous student in the U.S. was Mauricio Lasansky, who established the printmaking workshop at the University

of Iowa. The Hayter philosophy contrasted sharply with the collaborative workshop of the WPA. Hayter, influenced by the spontaneity of Surrealism, saw the act of printmaking as a struggle with the materials. An artist worked through the materials in every aspect of the process to reach her or his own expression. In contrast, the WPA workshops had been predicated on a division of labor. Some were printers, some hand-colored the lithographs, and some were the artists who drew the image. Atelier 17 envisioned the individual artist in near-battle with the metal plate.

And it was primarily metal, or intaglio, that was fostered in the Atelier 17 studio. The print media seen as more democratic by the WPA artists were generally sidelined. But adherents of the Atelier 17 approach also claimed to speak for democratic ideals. Here is how Dennis Beall put it in a 1964 essay:^{xi}

The European tradition of the artist-artisan relationship in printing was thus an obstruction. This class-conscious ritual has never set well with the American mentality.

Beall was then curator at the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts in San Francisco. In his essay he clearly describes the early 1960s as the golden moment when printmaking was ascendant. His words at that time give some feel for the sense of what was accomplished by this postwar generation:

Printmaking has at no time in its history achieved a more forceful or vital position in artistic activity than at the present. It has become a major exponent of contemporary visual ideas as well as an important area of artistic exploration. Nor is it limited to any specific locale. The proliferation of exhibitions, workshops, galleries which will handle prints, graphics departments in colleges and museums is ample testimony to the growth of popular interest. Much more important is the fact that printmakers are steadily destroying that precious misapprehension that prints are merely a reflection of, or an adjunct to, painting and sculpture.

Beall had been a student of John Ihle at San Francisco State College. Ihle and Karl Kasten, at UC Berkeley, were connected with the Lasansky print program at the University of Iowa. When Leon Goldin came to teach at the California College of Arts and Crafts (later California College of the Arts) around 1950, he brought with him an approach to color lithography based on the Atelier 17 ideals. Will Petersen, Mel Strawn, Nathan Oliveira, Richard Graf, George Miyasaki, Dennis Beall, John Ihle, and others all worked in color lithography, exploring the medium, not making representational images. The abstract quality of these prints was a direct expression of the same ideal that was shaping Abstract Expressionism—a struggle with the materials. It made perfect sense as a way to teach printmaking, and that was the approach that Dennis Beall followed as a print teacher at San Francisco State from 1965 to 1992.^{xii}

The enthusiasm for printmaking in general and color lithography in particular led Mel Strawn and Will Petersen, then grad students at California College of Arts and Crafts, to hit upon the idea of forming a print society to showcase the work of printmakers. It was an impulsive decision not unlike the decision in late 1912 in a restaurant in San Francisco to form CSE. Strawn and Petersen, putting the cart before the horse, found a willing venue at

the Oakland Art Museum before there was a juror, or even a society.^{xiii} In 1955 the Bay Printmakers Society (BPS) was founded with this first of six national juried exhibitions held at Bay Area museums through 1960. The first BPS show attracted a large number of major printmakers: Warrington Colescott, Leonard Baskin, and many others, including Nathan Oliveira, who was a fellow grad student at California College of Arts and Crafts. The show was juried by John Paul Jones from the University of California, Los Angeles, who had been a student of Lasansky's.

The director at the Oakland Museum was Paul Chadbourne Mills who joined the BPS in its meetings, and helped guide the course of the society for a time. The dynamic and forward-looking Mills embraced a new generation of local artists with a new aesthetic. He played a key role in the Bay Area Figurative Movement, organizing its seminal exhibition at the museum in 1957. Mills had proposed in 1954 that California be the sole focus of the Oakland Museum, a radical approach at the time. He saw himself as a risk taker willing to embrace the Bay Area art movements of the day that other museums were avoiding.^{xiv} But Mills' claim that Bay Area museums weren't interested in California art is only partially true because the major museums did in fact regularly show the work of the CSE during this period.

The BPS represented a new direction. It was largely built on two sources, Atelier 17 and the G.I. Bill funding of the university system. Many of the artists in the BPS were G.I. Bill alumni. Karl Kasten, John Ihle from WWII, and Mel Strawn and Will Petersen from the Korean War. The majority of print departments in Northern California were organized and taught by teachers who traced their roots in some fashion to Hayter and Lasansky. Among them were Karl Kasten, who built the print department at the University of California, Berkeley; John Ihle, who started the San Francisco State College print area; and Dennis Beall, who later taught there as well. Lasansky himself taught briefly at the San Francisco Art Institute. Kathryn Metz, who taught at University of California, Santa Cruz, studied at Atelier 17 and also at UCLA with John Paul Jones.

In a speech to the CSP delivered in 1990, printmaker and San Francisco Art Institute instructor Dick Graf delineated the two sides of Bay Area printmaking. It was a conceptual view of printmaking in the Bay Area first voiced by Ernst Gunter Troche, former director of the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts. Troche described the two sides of Northern California printmaking as being made up of those influenced on the one hand by Hayter's approach to printmaking, which valued experimentation as an end, or by what was called the *defection* of Gabor Peterdi, who embraced content first.^{xv} Peterdi had been a student of Hayter's at Atelier 17, but had gone his own way. Today it might be hard to see in Peterdi's work a *defection* from Hayter, but the view, according to Graf, was that Peterdi made the tremendous leap to putting image before technique.^{xvi}

Graf cited several examples of the *defection*—Gordon Cook, Wayne Thiebaud, Robert Bechtle and Roy Ragle—but perhaps no better representative of the *defection* to content can be found than Beth Van Hoesen, who despite studying at the California School of Fine Arts with Clifford Still and David Park at the birth of abstraction in California, maintained her own vision of the primacy of subject matter throughout her life.

This dichotomy of approaches to printmaking between Hayter and Peterdi is useful in thinking about Northern California printmaking. The interest in subject first or the interest in technique first can be seen as a way to understand different trends from 1950 on. But of course this dichotomy had broken down long before Dick Graf's 1990 speech. In fact, as Dennis Beall was celebrating the high point of printmaking in his 1964 essay, a new force was growing in the Bay Area, one that would eclipse the artist-printmaker model of Atelier 17.

Crown Point Press was founded by Kathan Brown in 1962. It was the first of what became a wave of print publishers in the Bay Area, which in turn was part of a nationwide wave. Tamarind Press had been established in 1960 in Los Angeles at about the same time as Universal Limited Art Editions in New York. The model of the artist/printer collaboration, so disliked by the Atelier 17 School, was back! A partial list in the Bay Area by 1992 included Crown Point Press, Ernest F. de Soto Workshop, Experimental Workshop, Limestone Press, Made in California, Magnolia Editions, Teaberry Press, Trillium Graphics, and a range of smaller print publishers and letterpress book publishers that also made prints. The print publishers invited artists to come in and make prints with the technicians who could make it happen. In a sense it was the same model as the WPA but applied as a commercial venture and lacking the community print structure.

The print publisher model continued to grow locally and nationally. It seemed to have successfully eclipsed the memory of many in the art world who repeat like a catechism that printmaking was "rediscovered" in 1960. The print publisher model had grown to such an extent that by 1999 when Achenbach curator Karin Breuer was interviewed by artist Sandy Walker she saw little hope for a future of printmaking outside of the print publishing realm. The effects of the print publishers on Bay Area printmaking itself are hard to judge. Certainly they are a huge presence, and certainly they dominate the vision of museums, galleries, curators, and critics. For example, David Bonetti, former *San Francisco Examiner* art critic, admitted to Sandy Walker that he was unaware of nearly all printmaking outside of the major print publishers.^{xvii}

It is striking the way that the print publishers moved the philosophy of printmaking away from that of Atelier 17. They replaced Atelier 17's focus on process and technique as tools in the search for personal expression with an interest in the perfection of craft and the reproducibility of an artist's style in a new media.

Printmaking was indeed vibrant before the *rediscovery* by the print publishers. Looking back at the period from 1955 to 1965, almost every year the CSE and the BPS would have a major show at a Bay Area museum, sometimes two. The BPS held national juried exhibitions, with jurors of note including John Paul Jones, Gordon Cook, Kenneth Patchen, and Wayne Thiebaud. There were members' shows at the three major San Francisco museums^{xviii}. As the art critic Alfred Frankenstein said:

The annual exhibition of the CSE is at the San Francisco Museum of Art this year. It has a way of moving about among the museums, not because it doesn't know where to settle but because it is welcome in all of the city's galleries and so belongs peculiarly to none.^{xix}

But this impressive record of museum shows came to an abrupt end right before the two societies merged. Elizabeth Ginno Winkler invited the BPS to join with with CSE, creating the California Society of Printmakers (CSP) in 1968. In the long run of multiple museum shows there was one more in 1970 at the Oakland Museum. Between 1970 and 1994 there was one museum show for CSP—at the San Jose Museum in 1982. Since then, the Triton Museum in Santa Clara has hosted three shows, the number of museum shows now averaging one a decade. It might be tempting to see the CSE/BPS merger as the healing of the great divide between Hayter and Peterdi, with Peterdi as the representative of the more imagist oriented CSE, and Hayter's followers more representative of the BPS. But the healing of this split came at a time when the philosophies they each represent appeared increasingly irrelevant.

The late 1960s and early '70s marked a moment of great change for printmaking as it did for American society in general. The Hayter vs. Peterdi split, while still a useful metaphor in describing printmakers associated with art schools, wasn't enough to define all the changes coming as the 1960s moved forward. The print publishers were one change, but there were others. And in this rather academically oriented Hayter vs. Peterdi division much was overlooked. First, of course, were the leftist artists who had existed in a world of their own through the long years of the McCarthy purges and were still centered around the Graphic Arts Workshop. The Workshop had continued as a cooperative studio with a core of dedicated longtime members. In 1973, due to internal struggles, it formally moved away from direct political affiliation and decided to focus on simply providing an environment for members to pursue their own artwork. The Workshop has since fostered a strong sense of individual visions eschewing any sense of a particular "look" that often exists in workshop settings. While working there, artists such as David Avery, Alice Gibbons, Sarah Newton, Gloria Morales, William Wolff, and Alp Ozbecker each pursued their unique voice as members of a cooperative. While the move away from political activism may have saved the workshop from the sectarianism that plagued leftist groups in the late 1970s, it seems an ironic moment to move away from politics—just at the height of an actual *rediscovery*—this one of leftist politics in printmaking.

In the late 1960s a new wave of printmaking flowered into existence still largely overlooked and underrepresented by the mainstream art world. Serigraphy made a big comeback as *screenprint* and the political awareness of the 1960s began to take concrete form in community workshops with a focus completely outside of the Hayter vs. Peterdi nexus. In 1968, San Francisco State College was involved in a long and bitter strike. Dennis Beall, Professor of Art from 1965 to 1992, opened the art department up for screenprint and the creation of strike posters. The strikes, protests and police attacks caused the print studio to be shut down several times in the course of the strike, which lasted until 1969. Out of this ferment came many poster workshops that developed off campus. Rupert Garcia emerged as one of the well-known artists from this struggle. In 1969, at the University of California, Berkeley, the struggle for ethnic studies, known as the Third World Strike, had a similar galvanizing effect on screenprint; Malaquias Montoya emerged from that struggle as a significant figure in the creation of political poster screenprints. From that point on, the political poster screenprint movement blossomed.

The Royal Chicano Air Force formed in Sacramento in 1969, for example, and was quickly followed by many other ethnically based workshops. La Raza Silkscreen was formed in

1971; Kearny Street Workshop 1972, Japantown Art and Media center in the later '70s and in 1982 Mission Grafica was founded by Jos Sances and Rene Castro.^{xx} The drive to create these workshops came to a large extent from a need to project new voices, and to give the community a media presence. The workshops were closely tied to political struggles. By the time Mission Grafica was formed many of the other workshops had gone through significant changes. Kearny Street Workshop was displaced from the I-Hotel—the target of gentrification and the center of a tumultuous struggle to save it. La Raza Silkscreen changed its focus towards offset printing and became La Raza Graphics.

As the workshops were displaced or moved in the direction of mass production media, Mission Grafica began to fill the need for a workshop dedicated to screenprint. Jos Sances brought a background both in commercial screenprint as well as in studio art training. Rene Castro was a political refugee from Pinochet's coup in Chile, bringing a strong international solidarity perspective. In the early years Mission Grafica became a bit of a star-studded environment, working on album covers and even stage sets with several rock bands including U2, Jackson Browne, and Carlos Santana. While Mission Grafica continued and expanded the political poster movement of the 1970s into international political struggles, the aesthetic and technical proficiency of the workshop made it a center for creating limited edition fine art screenprints. These prints, side by side with community event posters, made for a unique blend of fine art and community art, which for a time broke through into the mainstream art world with museum shows and wider art world interest. Many printmakers came through Mission Grafica including Juan Fuentes, Enrique Chagoya, Nancy Hom, Mary Lovelace O'Neil, Juana Alicia, Mildred Howard, and Herbert Siguenza. In some cases these artists created their own prints and in other cases their work was printed by Sances and Castro. In its early years Mission Grafica could be called a print publisher to the community but it later evolved to become more of an open community print shop.

The ethnic-based political print shops were not the only ones to move toward the workshop model. In 1973 CSP, under the direction of Eleanor Rappe, was searching for a place to put together a CSP workshop. They found one temporarily in the space run by printing press manufacturer Griffin Press in Oakland. But the studio space was inadequate and short lived. A year later Rappe was able to start a community service print class through San Francisco City College after generating interest through her etching classes at the Graphic Arts Workshop. In 1975 the classes moved to Fort Mason—a former military base being converted through the National Park Service for use by social and cultural groups. First-year rent for art programs at Fort Mason was one dollar. Anita Toney and Xavier Viramontes, while art students at San Francisco State University, looked to Rappe for instruction in etching. Rappe developed a systematic way to teach color etching using a multi-plate process that focused less on process and more on consistency of results. Viramontes and Toney both joined Rappe as teachers at Fort Mason a few years after graduating. These three developed a clear structured approach to color print etchings, eschewing the experimental approach of Atelier 17.

The Fort Mason print studio eventually became a center for representational color prints that attracted many artists who had already studied printmaking but sought a more direct approach to image making. Although incorporated into the credit system of San Francisco

City College in 1990, the classes continue to provide studio access to printmakers on an affordable basis.

Another important print workshop also came into being in the 1970s. Archana Horsting and Yuzo Nakano studied printmaking at Atelier 17 in Paris in the 1970s before starting Kala Art Institute in 1974. It began small in a garage in San Francisco, and in 1979 moved to its present location in Berkeley. While known as a printmaking center, Kala has continually evolved to include a wide range of equipment for both traditional printmaking as well as digital media, photography, and book arts. Its Atelier 17 origins can still be seen in the emphasis on artistic expression and technological innovation. Kala is a fee-based workshop, with the added layer of competitively awarded six-month residencies. Kala also has an educational emphasis, with a wide variety of classes offered. But most importantly for the artists working there, it has become a center for the exchange of ideas and friendships among printmakers from around the world. The many artists who have worked with Kala over the years include such dynamic printers as Kathy Aoki, Jessica Dunne, Jimin Lee, Emmanuel Montoya, Artemio Rodriguez, Toru Sugita, Seiko Tachibana, and Kazuko Watanabe.

The creation in the 1970s of both the Kala Art Institute and of the Fort Mason print classes was in essence the culmination of the two competing print visions articulated by Ernst Troche. Representatives of the Hayter vs. Peterdi split had each found their workshop homes outside of the university system. And it was just in time. For the first generation of Hayter students began to retire from university teaching, and their replacements had little or no connection with that school of thought. The creation of Kala institutionalized the Hayter model in the Bay Area providing continuity to its key ingredient—an emphasis on the primacy of technical exploration.

A further institution that developed in the fecund 70s was also based at Fort Mason. The World Print Council was established there and, as its name suggests, it had great ambitions. Indeed, the World Print Council had exhibitions of printmakers from around the world, giving opportunities to international printmakers as well as to a few local artists such as Roy Ragle, who showed there in 1980. The Council was founded in 1978 although it seems to have had some earlier activities as well. It helped to coordinate international print competitions at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art on a triennial basis up until at least 1983, possibly 1987. The Council published a newsletter, *PrintNews* from 1979 to 1986, and then the *World Print Courier* in 1987 only. About that time the Council dissolved. At one time it had a board of directors representing print publishers, curators, and print workshops, a virtual who's who of the Bay Area print world. That brief moment was a high water mark for the community of printmaking in the Bay Area.^{xxi}

The explosion of ethnic media print workshops, non-political workshops, and general printmaking activity was emblematic of wider changes pushing the safe zone of the art world in the 1970s. Another area that changed dramatically at the same time was the new infusion of women into art world positions. A microcosm of this change can be seen in the print departments in Northern California. Kathryn Metz created the print department at the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1971 and taught there until her retirement in 1992. Barbara Foster joined the faculty at San Francisco State in 1975. Sylvia Lark taught first at Sacramento State and then from 1977 until 1990 at the University of California, Berkeley.

Sylvia Solochek Walters began teaching printmaking in 1963 in the Midwest. In 1984, she became a faculty member and permanent Chair of the art department at San Francisco State University, retiring from that position in 2004.

Prior to the 1970s few women taught in Northern California print departments. One notable exception was Janet Turner, who started the printmaking program at California State University, Chico when she began teaching there in 1959. She was also a print collector, and by the time of her retirement in 1981 had established the only museum dedicated solely to printmaking in Northern California—the Turner Print Museum on the campus of CSU Chico.

The 1970s were obviously a booming time for prints. So many groups formed—several of which continue to the present—all of them fulfilling to some extent the traditional role that the CSE/BPS had played. The CSP board of the 1970s had put its energy into finding a workshop that culminated in the Fort Mason print studios. But that only served a limited slice of the organization. A new direction for the organization came about gradually as the CSP tried different strategies to deal with the newly populated landscape of print organizations. One of the directions that seems to have been more successful was exchange exhibitions.^{xxii} Between 1978 and 1999 there were eight multi-venue exchange exhibitions with sister print groups in the U.S, Canada, the U.K, Denmark, the Netherlands and Japan. The majority of these exhibits happened in the late 1980s. A few national juried exhibitions were put on during this time as well. All of this suggests a growing internationalism in the print world both in and out of Northern California.

However, CSP could no longer command the heights it had with its 1950s and 1960s museum shows. In 1977, Achenbach curator Robert Flynn Johnson sent a letter to the CSP, presumably in response to a request for a museum showing of CSP artists. Johnson's letter states that the CSP is too big, and that the Achenbach Foundation's "independence is constantly threatened by artist group(s)." Were one group allowed to show, he went on, others would demand exhibitions.^{xxiii} It was a cold wake-up call to CSP that it had entered a new era. Johnson, despite the harshness of his critique, did continue to act as the only consistent curatorial support for the CSP for many years. He spoke at meetings, juried shows, and exhibited prints at the San Francisco Fine Arts Museums by individual members of CSP, if not of the organization as a whole. In truth, while he was the harbinger of the end of one era, he continued to support CSP during its transition to the less central role the society assumed as the print world broadened around it.

Despite the growing number of printmaking institutions, CSP continued for many years to be a relatively clubby group. In its earlier years the membership fluctuated between 60 at the high points and 20 at the lows. The membership, as would be expected, really started to grow in the 1970s. But it wasn't until Roy Ragle carved out a niche for himself on the CSP board around 1986 that the membership went through the roof. Ragle sought out printmakers and vastly expanded the membership at the rate of up to five new members a month, bringing together the lost tribes of printmakers. Within a few years, he had more than doubled the membership to 275 members in 1988. The membership numbers have stayed at that level ever since. In addition to bringing in new artists, Ragle confronted the more limited idea of what was a print by seeking out printmakers who practiced techniques that were held in low esteem. A woodcut artist himself, Ragle made a point of bringing all

the woodcut artists he knew into the CSP. He also sought out screenprint artists as well as those working solely in monotype—a somewhat dubious print form in the eyes of some traditionalists.

Among those Ragle sought out were members of the Graphic Arts Workshop (GAW), bringing that organization into closer connection with the CSP than it had ever been. Within a few years most of the board of the CSP was made up of members of the Graphic Arts Workshop, with longtime GAW member William Wolff becoming president and, numerous others, including Patricia C. Brandes and John Connolly serving on the board.

Expansion of the membership of CSP was part of a wider trend of expansion of *acceptable* print media. As an example, monotype had been a growing tradition in the Bay Area since the 1970s, with Nathan Oliveira one of its chief early practitioners. Charles Gill, teaching at California College of Arts and Crafts, worked with multiple drop monotypes to create realistic images in the 1970s. Eleanor Rappe and Xavier Viramontes at Fort Mason developed an approach to monotype that also focused on multi-drop with a concise method for creating layered printing.

While monotype offered a looser and more painterly direction for prints, the publication of Carol Wax's 1990 book on mezzotint^{xxiv} seemed at once to capture and inspire a renewed interest in that media. Locally, the Vorpall Gallery had been pushing mezzotints by M.C. Escher and Yozo Hamaguchi for many years, and some local printmakers had also decided to give it a try. Among those was George Shuey, whose abstract mezzotints had more in common with Hayter than Hamaguchi. Holly Downing went to London to study mezzotint in the 1970s, and was among the local artists featured in a 1982 show of mezzotints at the World Print Council. The 1990s also saw a growing interest in mezzotint by California artists including James Groleau, Sharon Augusta Mitchell, and Warren Lee.

At the same time, the book arts, long dismissed as a close if lesser relative to printmaking, began its steady rise to a place at the table in the art world. The number of fine press book printers, many of whom incorporate printmaking, has remained strong. The community of book artists was brought together in 1996 by Mary Austin and Kathleen Burch with the founding of the San Francisco Center for the Book. With its emphasis on all aspects of the book arts, it was the first and still the only center of its kind on the West Coast.

These questions of new media, defining the outer edges of printmaking, were all discussed within the various forms of the CSP publications over the years. A steady stream of CSP members contributed to these publications, including David Smith-Harrison, Janet Jones, Linda Goodman, Linda Lee Boyd, Sylvia Solochek Walters, and, for several years now, an ever-revolving series of guest editors. In many respects, the history of printmaking can be read in the pages of these publications. In the early 1990s, long before it became clear that digital was inevitably joined at the hip of printmaking, there were issues dedicated to digital art in printmaking. A late 1990s questionnaire found the CSP membership largely split over the issue of what constituted an original print in relation to digital art, but at the same time, a spirit of inquiry was obvious as well.

The screenprint experienced a renewed interest in the late 1990s and into the twenty first century. Under the direction of Juan Fuentes and long-time teacher Calixto Robles, Mission

Grafica became a kind of incubator for a long list of spin-off print groups. Screenprint had begun to disappear from many university class schedules, but developments towards less toxic materials, as well as, counter-intuitively, the rise of digital media, gave new life to screenprint both in the university and in the political workshop setting. In 2000, the San Francisco Print Collective was formed primarily to address issues of gentrification and displacement in San Francisco. It began as a street poster collective originating out of Mission Grafica. The collective is a nomadic workshop that integrates with activist groups to teach them the tools they need to create political posters. The use of software to create images makes poster making less of an issue of drawing skills and more about digital collage. A similar interest in the interface between digital media as the source, and screenprint as the output, has led to a re-emergence of interest in screenprinting in university art departments—the physical nature of printing being felt by many students as a more direct connection to the artwork than through the computer interface.

This contribution of digital media to a revived interest in screenprints has a parallel in the screenprint workshops of the 1970s, which were also riding the cusp of new media. Screenprinting was useful to these groups, but printmaking was not an end in itself. La Raza Silkscreen became La Raza Graphics and eventually gave up screenprint not out of disloyalty to printmaking, but out of a need for greater efficiency of production. Today's equivalents would be the many new media graphic design shops that also create posters, sometimes even screenprint posters, like Tumis and Design Action in Oakland. Traditional screenprint shops like Alliance Graphics in Berkeley also fit this model. Despite its core screenprint business, the shop branches out to new digital printing techniques.

Digital has had an impact on the print publishing world as well. While Crown Point Press, and its spinoff Paulson Bott Press, still thrives, a number of other print publishers have ceased activity. Two that have moved firmly away from printmaking toward digital art production are Magnolia Editions and Electric Works. Magnolia Editions has reinvented itself as a Renaissance artist's workshop that can create whatever digital output the artist desires, whether tapestries or monumental public art. Electric Works split away from Trillium Graphics in 2007 to pursue similar ends—pinball machines, soup cans, any surface imaginable to print on, with a range of products made possible by digital processes.

How digital art production affects traditional print publishers is a question closely watched. Print publishing in its current form is a business model; will the market switch its faith to digital publishers? A more relevant question is where this leaves what might be called independent, or non-aligned, printmakers who are currently facing a hostile environment. Most print galleries are gone, traditional printmaking is under duress, and schools underfunded. The economics of printmaking have been looking increasingly poor since the 1990s. Dennis Beall's pronouncement in 1964 regarding the great strides that printmaking has taken does sound like a dream of Eden today. Go back and read his statement, "Printmaking has at no time in its history achieved a more forceful or vital position in artistic activity than at the present." It sounds a long way from where we stand now. There is, however, another more optimistic view of printmaking today.

CSP and the other print organizations that sprang up over the years since World War II have for the most part survived—the Graphic Arts Workshop, various university print departments, Fort Mason print shop, Kala Art Institute, and Mission Grafica. Printmakers

have struggled to remain relevant through changes of aesthetics, media, politics, and the expanding art world. They have sought new directions while simultaneously balancing a respect for the traditions and craft needed to create prints. At the same time, printmaking has grown too large to encompass a press bed, too large to limit to a frame, too large to be only on paper, and in the end, too large to be separate from digital technology. The size and diversity of prints and the contemporary printmaking community was surely unthinkable to the four printmakers who schemed over dinner 100 years ago to create the CSE as a society to enhance exhibiting opportunities.

But conversely, that small elite world, so easy to understand, is equally impossible today. We live now in a world of plenty, of excess even. And that is likely the strength of printmaking: to embrace that variety, that excess, and follow it to the next plateau. The present world of prints and printmaking has ever fuzzier edges marking the boundaries of what is a print. The very broad definitions of printmaking and the applicability of the language of printmaking to other media makes for a less clear but arguably more robust field. The leaders, the top artists, the masters, are less easily discerned; no one today could claim the title of America's best etcher bestowed on John Winkler in the 1920s. That is partly because few would care, but also because the jungle-like tangle surrounding the world of prints has grown ungainly and wild. Some might mourn the loss of clarity about movements and hierarchies, and certainly the mainstream art world will continue to pretend it is the final judge of value. But the beauty of this bountiful world of prints and printmakers is in their very range and diversity.

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Notes for Moving Toward Multiplicity: Printmaking in Northern California – The 1940s to the Present

ⁱ Millman, Mary & Dave Bohn, *Master of Line: John W. Winkler, American Etcher*. Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1994.

ⁱⁱ Information on Warren's Olde Style paper is from conversations with Daniel Lienau, The Annex Galleries. William Wolff, later president of the CSP, attended the California School of Fine Arts before World War II where he did a lithographic portrait of Ray Bertrand printed on this paper.

ⁱⁱⁱ Seaton, Elizabeth Gaede, *Federal Prints and Democratic Culture: The Graphic Arts Division of the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project, 1935-1943*. Diss., Northwestern University, 2000, p. 111.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, pp. 107-114.

^v The Rincon Annex Mural project was awarded to Anton Refregier while the WPA still existed but was not completed until 1949 due to the interruption of World War II.

^{vi} *The California Labor School*, by John Skovgaard, was available on the Graphic Arts Workshop website in 2003, and is currently available through the Internet Archive's Way Back Machine at <http://web.archive.org/web/20030530011601/http://gaw.zpub.com/laborschool-thesis.html>

^{vii} The cassette-taped oral history interview of Stanley Koppel by Elinor Randall Keeney is included in the *History of Graphic Arts Workshop* located at the Bancroft Library.

^{viii} The San Francisco Art Festival, held in the Civic Center, was an important annual event for more than thirty years serving in many ways the same function that Bay Area Open Studios does today.

^{ix} *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sept 17, 1955. Also referenced in the Sept. 16, 2005 issue of the *Chronicle* in a look at past events entitled "One-third of U.S. watches 'Shogun.'" Available online at <http://www.sfgate.com/default/article/One-third-of-U-S-watches-Shogun-2569120.php>

^x Rowe, Frank, *The Enemy Among Us: A Story of Witch-Hunting in the McCarthy Era*. Sacramento: Cougar Books, 1980.

^{xi} From Dennis Beall's essay, "Contemporary Printmaking in Northern California" in *Contemporary Prints from Northern California: For the Art in the Embassies Program 1966-1968*. United States State Department, Oakland Museum, 1966. Unpaginated.

^{xii} Beall, Dennis, conversation with the author, February 2012.

^{xiii} Strawn, Mel, "Reminiscences", *California Printmaker*, Summer 1988, pp. 4-5.

^{xiv} "California Art at the Oakland Museum," by Paul Chadbourne Mills, included in *Plein Air Painters of California, The North*, Irvine, CA: Westphal Publishing, 1986. The recent popular film, *Beginners*, written and directed by Mike Mills, tells the story of his father Paul Mills coming out of the closet late in life.

^{xv} "In the past twenty-five years, adventurous artists with a healthy disregard for the taboos of the graphic arts have tried just about everything that can be used or abused for printing. . . . Now I feel that we have reached the crucial turning point; the period of experimentation for its own sake is over. Now we have to digest what we know in order to express what we are." Gabor Peterdi, in the "Introduction" to his book, *Printmaking: Methods Old and New*, (first published in 1959). 10th ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1980, p. xxiv.

^{xvi} "Bay Area Printmaking As Seen by Richard Graf," by Michele Ferandell, *The California Printmaker*, April 1990, p. 3.

^{xvii} Both the Breuer and Bonetti interviews by Sandy Walker appear in the October 1999 issue of *The California Printmaker*: "The Independent Printmaker: An Interview with Karin Breuer", pp. 14-16, and "The Hidden Experience: An Interview with David Bonetti", pp. 16-18.

^{xviii} A complete list of exhibitions is located in Appendix 5.

^{xix} Frankenstein, Alfred, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 31, 1960.

^{xx} Rossman, Michael, and Terri Cohn. *Speak! You Have the Tools: Social Serigraphy in the San Francisco Bay Area*, 1966-1986. Santa Clara, CA: de Saisset Museum, Santa Clara University, 1987.

^{xxi} *PrintNews*, Vol. 6-7, World Print Council, 1984.

^{xxii} The international viewpoint of CSP was initiated by Swiss-born Rolf Eiselin, CSP President in 1983, who launched *Prints USA* in 1984. Sherry Smith Bell continued the trend by coordinating several major international shows between 1986 and 1988. A related CSP-British exhibition and an exchange with the Graphic Workshop of Odense, Denmark ended CSP's major international surge in 1989. See Appendix 5: Exhibitions and Sources.

^{xxiii} Letter from Robert F. Johnson to CSP board as noted in minutes of CSP meeting, May 14, 1977 and again June 11, 1977. CSP Records, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Banc Mss 88/53c, Carton 1:45.

^{xxiv} Wax, Carol, *The Mezzotint: History and Technique*. New York: H. N. Abrams, 1990.