2003

Why Draw a Landscape?: A Portfolio of Prints by Contemporary Artists

University of Richmond Museums

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Why Draw a Landscape?

A Portfolio of Prints by Contemporary Artists

August 20 to December 7, 2003

Joel and Lila Harnett Print Study Center
University of Richmond Museums
INTRODUCTION

Why Draw a Landscape? features a portfolio of prints on the theme of landscape in contemporary art, commissioned by Crown Point Press in San Francisco and completed in 1999. Each of the eleven participating artists answered the question with a print that attests to the vitality of the natural world.

Collectively, this portfolio includes a diversity of artistic approaches, ranging from documentary accuracy, to expressive images, to abstraction in which areas of colors suggest the landscape. Each print is an etching, yet a wide variety of techniques are employed to convey the artist’s vision. Upon closer investigation, the prints reveal myriad associations to the land and how we view ourselves within that context.

This exhibition has also provided the opportunity to highlight landscape prints from the museum’s permanent collection. Ranging from a sixteenth-century woodcut to a twenty-first-century mezzotint, this selection reveals the rich history and variety of approaches to representing nature in art.

Organized by the Joel and Lila Harnett Print Study Center, University of Richmond Museums, the exhibition was co-curated by N. Elizabeth Schlatter, Assistant Director, University Museums, and Christopher Oliver (AR’05), art history major at the University of Richmond and the 2003 Harnett Summer Fellow. The project was a major part of Chris’s summer fellowship in the Harnett Print Study Center. He was responsible for the essay and other material included in this brochure and for researching and writing the text on the extended labels in the exhibition.

We would like to thank the many donors who have generously given several of these prints to the University Museums and a special thanks to Joel (RC’45) and Lila Harnett, not only for their ongoing generosity to the University of Richmond but specifically for funding Christopher Oliver’s 2003 summer fellowship.

Richard Waller
Executive Director
University of Richmond Museums

WHY DRAW A LANDSCAPE?

In the late 1990s, Kathan Brown, founder and director of Crown Point Press in San Francisco, posed the question, “Why draw a landscape?” to eleven artists who did not use printmaking as their primary medium. She selected the artists based on their idiosyncratic styles and approaches to the subject of landscape.

Through this collaboration, Brown discovered that each artist focused on his or her view of the relationship between humanity and nature. For example, Ed Ruscha addresses the very question of what comprises a landscape in his print, Van Ness, Santa Monica, Vine, Melrose by evoking the cityscape of Los Angeles with only the names of some of its prominent boulevards. This is strikingly different from the work of Anne Appleby, who does not attempt to describe a specific landscape at all, but merely tries to convey the sensations that her subject evokes. Even though Appleby’s print, Winter, is completely abstract, a sense of the brisk early winter air mingling through the conifer trees is present. Ruscha relies upon the written word to convey his scene while Appleby uses color. The way in which each artist chooses to communicate with the viewer is as representative of the landscape as the content itself.

The additional prints from the permanent collection of the University Museums vary greatly in date and technique, and they, directly or indirectly, address how the artist relates to his or her own time. Woodcut artist J. J. Lankes looks at the rapidly changing landscape of early twentieth-century America in his print, Boy Looking Towards City. While the older man literally whittles away beneath a tree, the young boy sees his future in the city. The split between the two figures is representative of the evolving American environment of this period.

Saul Steinberg also recalls American history and landscape in his print, Untitled 10. Influenced by his own immigrant experience, Steinberg includes images of the Great Plains, horse-drawn wagons, rubber stamps, and the suggestion of a postcard from an exotic locale to evoke a sense of the American frontier.

Urban or rural, historical or contemporary, realistic or abstract — the landscapes in this
exhibition reveal as much about the artists as about their environment. A timeless subject for art, landscapes nonetheless are constantly changing, providing artists with never-ending inspiration and challenges.

Christopher Oliver (AR'05)
Art history major in the Department of Art and Art History, University of Richmond, and 2003 Joel and Lila Harnett Summer Fellow

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

WHY DRAW A LANDSCAPE?
All the prints in the portfolio are number 19 from the edition of 50, published by Crown Point Press. The portfolio is in the permanent collection of the Joel and Lila Harnett Print Study Center, University of Richmond Museums, Museum purchase. Dimensions are in inches, height precedes width.

Anne Appleby (American, born 1954)
Winter, 1998
color aquatint with burnishing on paper, image: 8 1/2 x 11, sheet: 20 x 16, H2002.09.11

Robert Bechtle (American, born 1932)
House Near Stinson Beach, 1998
color soft ground etching with spit bite aquatint on paper, image: 8 x 13, sheet: 20 x 16, H2002.09.05

Jane Freilicher (American, born 1924)
Late Afternoon, Southampton, 1999
color spit bite aquatint with hand ground etching and drypoint on paper, image: 12 x 15, sheet: 20 x 16, H2002.09.02

April Gornik (American, born 1953)
Stepped Waterfall, 1998
color direct gravure with spit bite aquatint on paper, image: 7 1/4 x 7, sheet: 20 x 16, H2002.09.09

Bryan Hunt (American, born 1947)
Small Cairn, 1998
color sugar lift and soap ground aquatint with soft ground etching and drypoint on paper, image: 10 3/4 x 9, sheet: 20 x 16, H2002.09.08

Sylvia Plimack Mangold (American, born 1938), Pin Oak Detail, 1999
color soft ground etching with spit bite aquatint on paper, image: 11 x 9, sheet: 20 x 16, H2002.09.01

Tom Marioni (American, born 1937)
Process Landscape, 1998
color spit bite aquatint on paper, image: 15 1/2 x 10, sheet: 20 x 16, H2002.09.06

David Nash (British, born 1945)
Ash Dome, 1998
direct gravure on paper, image: 11 x 14 1/2, sheet: 20 x 16, H2002.09.07

Joan Nelson (American, born 1958)
Untitled (#2), 1999
color direct gravure with drypoint on paper, image: 5 3/4 x 6 1/4, sheet: 20 x 16, H2002.09.10

Ed Ruscha (American, born 1937)
Van Ness, Santa Monica, Vine, Melrose, 1999
direct gravure on paper, image: 20 x 16, sheet: 20 x 16, H2002.09.04

Pat Steir (American, born 1938)
Tiny Green, 1998
color soap ground aquatint with drypoint on paper, image: 15 1/4 x 11 3/4, sheet: 20 x 16, H2002.09.03

PRINTS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION
All the prints are from the permanent collection of the University of Richmond Museums. The H preceding the accession number indicates the print is from the Joel and Lila Harnett Print Study Center; the M indicates it is from the Marsh Art Gallery. Dimensions are in inches, height precedes width.

Unknown artist (American, 19th century)
Liberty (Celebrating the Statue of Liberty), circa 1883
mid-twentieth century restrike of steel engraving on paper, image: 5 1/2 x 4, sheet: 11 x 8 3/8, Gift of Joel and Lila Harnett, H2003.02.03
Hans Burgkmair (German, 1473-1531)
The Storming of Bern by Bartholomeo, n.d.
woodcut on paper, 8 3/4 x 7 3/4, The I. Webb Surratt, Jr. Print Collection, M1996.01.06

Stefano della Bella (Italian, 1610-1664)
Cow Drinking at a Water Trough, from the series, Diverse Caprices, 1647
etching on paper, 3 1/4 x 4 1/8, Gift of Frank Holt, H2001.07.03

Jean-Honoré Fragonard (French, 1732-1806)
Le Petit Parc, 1763

Donald Furst (American, born 1953)
Suburban Nights: Swath, 2001
etching and mezzotint with photopolymer on paper, artist's proof, 10 x 16, Museum purchase (from the 5th American Print Biennial exhibition), H2002.10.01

Robert Gwathmey (American, 1903-1988)
A Section, 1961
color lithograph on paper, edition: 14/75, image: 17 x 18, sheet: 20 x 21, Gift of Joel and Lila Harnett, H2003.17.06

Robert Humphreys (American, 20th century)
The Soil is Rich There, from the portfolio Landscapes, 1990
lithograph with chine collé on paper, edition: 16/30, image: 10 x 7, sheet: 14 x 11, Gift of the Hand Workshop Art Center, Richmond, Virginia, H2001.09.01c

Art Hansen (American, born 1929)
Fisherman in a Rainstorm, 1982
etching on paper, edition: 32/250, 10 x 7 3/4, The I. Webb Surratt, Jr. Print Collection, M1996.01.54

Joseph B. Kidd (British, 1808-1889)
Ocho Rios Bay, from the series, West Indian Scenery Illustrations of Jamaica, n.d.

J. J. Lankes (American, 1884-1960)
Boy Looking Towards City, 1927

Norma Morgan (American, born 1928)
Mooreland Sanctuary, n.d.

Saul Steinberg (American, 1914-1999)
Untitled 10, from the portfolio For Meyer Schapiro, 1974
screenprint on paper, edition: 22/100, 31 x 22, The I. Webb Surratt, Jr. Print Collection, M1996.01.65j

John W. Winkler (American, 1890-1979)
Farms at St. Vallery-en-Caux, 1924
etching on paper, 1977 edition of 63, image: 7 1/2 x 9 1/2, sheet: 9 3/8 x 12 7/8, Gift of Carol Johnson and John Aronovici from the Estate of John W. Winkler, M2000.01.09