

Legion of Honor

Anderson Gallery of Contemporary Graphic Art

Black and White: Prints from the 1970s and 1980s



Fine Arts
Museums of
San Francisco

Black and White: Prints from the 1970s and 1980s

Karin Breuer, Curator of Contemporary Graphic Art

"Black and white are colors. Usually people say that black is the absence of white, they define one by the absence of the other, but that's ridiculous. Black includes all other colors as much as white, from the point of view of the psyche. Black comes first."

Sam Francis

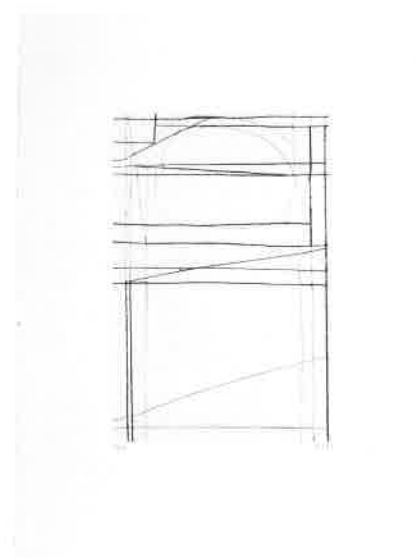
Though color was an important means of expression in American graphic art of the 1970s and 1980s, those decades also saw a reaffirmation of the vitality of the black-and-white print. For many artists who were comfortable drawing on lithographic stones or etching plates, working in black and white often replicated effects of the media used in their drawn work. Others sought to re-create their photo-based work by using intaglio techniques that could achieve tonal values similar to those found in a black-and-white photograph. Still others were intrigued with the potent symbolism associated with the color black. The twenty-two prints in this exhibition are examples of the diverse and creative ways in which artists used black inks and white paper to create art of tremendous visual power.

Richard Diebenkorn always maintained a brilliant color palette in his paintings while simultaneously working, almost exclusively, in black and white in his prints. He favored drypoint and etching because they were techniques that achieved a printed equivalent of his drawn lines in graphite, charcoal, and ink. Although Diebenkorn was encouraged to make color prints during the 1970s at Crown Point Press, he resisted. (It was not until 1980 that he began to make color etchings.) Instead he explored the possibilities of black in printed series such as *Nine Drypoints and Etchings* (1977). In that series, he described the stark black lines in each composition as the "bones of Ocean Park," referring to the dark underdrawing that defined the structure of his colorful abstract paintings at the time.

Like Diebenkorn, William Wiley often preferred working in black and white for his early prints. *For NoWhere's That Blame Treaty* (1979) Wiley intricately worked the copper plate in his characteristic style of line drawing. When the plate was proofed, the resulting prints had so much plate tone that almost all of Wiley's drawn work was obscured. Overcoming his initial dismay that so much of the composition was hidden, he allowed the publication of this mysterious looking print. However, rather than canceling the plate, he reworked it over the next three years, likening the plate to a blackboard surface that could be erased and reworked. The result was *NowHere's That Blame Treaty* (1983).



Nathan Oliveira,
Untitled, pl. VII from *To Edgar Allan Poe*, 1971



Richard Diebenkorn,
#4 from *Nine Drypoints and Etchings*, 1977

The use of deep, rich black color to add a metaphorical dimension in prints is evident in the series by Tim Rollins + K.O.S., *The Temptation of St. Antony I–XVI* (1989), which was inspired by Gustave Flaubert's book of 1874. Their efforts to create images of demons, the devil or "The Evil One" as identified in Flaubert's text, resulted in prints that conveyed a sinister, dark mood that could have been achieved only through the use of black ink. In the same way, Nathan Oliveira's intentional use of black in his lithographic series *To Edgar Allan Poe* successfully evokes the feeling of mystery and the macabre for which Poe's nineteenth-century short stories and poems are noted.

Chuck Close and Vija Celmins used photographs as the source for their painted and printed subjects in the 1970s and 1980s. Consequently, they worked frequently in black and white using the mezzotint process to great effect. In this process, an artist works "from dark to light," scraping and burnishing a roughened plate to create areas that will print white or gray on a field of solid black.

Brice Marden, an artist known for his work in geometric abstraction, worked exclusively in black and white for his etchings made at Crown Point Press during the 1970s. Each of the prints in his series *Five Plates* (1973) presents a different, symmetrical division of the rectangular field opposing black with white panels. Marden wanted each of the prints in the series to have a sense of physicality and accomplished this by building up layers of aquatint for a heavily modulated black area. So that there was a distinction between the white areas of the image and the margin of the paper, a light film of black ink was left on the blank areas of the plate to create tone.

For Richard Serra and the late Philip Guston, prints were a natural extension of their drawings, which were done primarily in black and white. For their prints made with Gemini G.E.L. in the 1970s, both artists drew on specially prepared papers that were transferred to lithographic plates for printing. The prints were, in essence, lithographic drawings characterized by the same energized black lines and forms found in the artists' work in black ink, charcoal, and paint stick. Guston died in 1981, with several of his black-and-white lithographs posthumously published. Serra continues to make prints at Gemini G.E.L. and remains committed to the use of black ink on white paper.

* Sam Francis, quoted in Ruth Fine, "Patterns Across the Membrane of the Mind," introduction to Connie W. Lembark, *The Prints of Sam Francis: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1992).



William Wiley,
NoWhere's That Blame Treaty, 1979



William Wiley,
NoWhere's That Blame Treaty, 1983



Brian Hunt, *Straight Falls*, 1979



Falls with Bend, 1979



Jasper Johns,
Two Flags (Black), 1970–1972



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May 31–September 28, 2003

Anderson Gallery of Contemporary Graphic Art

Many of the prints in this exhibition are from the Anderson Graphic Arts Collection, over 650 works given to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco in 1996 by Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson and their daughter, Mary Patricia Anderson Pence. The collection spans over thirty years of print production, from 1962 to 1999, 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 collection 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, or exhibitions previously presented at the Fine Arts Museums are available to small and mid-size institutions with no rental or participation fees.

Checklist of the Exhibition

Unless otherwise noted, all prints are from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Anderson Graphic Arts Collection, gift of the Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson Charitable Foundation.

Sheet measurements are in inches, height preceding width.

Robert Arneson
Benicia, California 1930–1994 Benicia, California
Pablo Picasso, from the series *Five Guys*, 1983
Woodcut, 31 5/16 x 24 13/16 in.
Printed by Will Foo and John Stemmer
Published by Experimental Workshop, San Francisco (now Emeryville)
1996.74.21

Vija Celmins
b. Riga, Latvia, 1939
Untitled (Ocean), 1971
Lithograph, 28 1/2 x 46 in.
Printed by Ed Hamilton
Published by Cirrus Editions, Los Angeles
1996.74.52

Strata, 1982
Mezzotint, 29 1/2 x 35 1/4 in.
Printed by Doris Simmelink
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.58

Chuck Close
b. Monroe, Washington, 1940
Keith, 1972
Mezzotint with roulette, 48 7/16 x 42 1/4 in.
Printed by Kathan Brown at Crown Point Press, Oakland (now San Francisco)
Published by Parasol Press, Ltd., New York
Crown Point Press Archive, Museum purchase, Whitney Warren Jr. Bequest Fund in memory of Mrs. Adolph B. Spreckels
1991.28.98

Richard Diebenkorn
Portland, Oregon 1922–1993 Berkeley, California
#4 from the portfolio *Nine Drypoints and Etchings*, 1977
Drypoint and etching with scraping and burnishing (Guillemín p. 114), 29 5/16 x 22 5/16 in.
Printed by John Slivon
Published by Crown Point Press, Oakland (now San Francisco)
Crown Point Press Archive, gift of Kathan Brown
1991.28.288

Sam Francis
San Mateo, California 1923–1994 Santa Monica, California
Straight Line of the Sun, 1976
Lithograph (Lembark L.187), 51 x 90 in.
Printed by Serge Lozingot
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.122

Philip Guston
Montreal, Quebec 1913–1980 Woodstock, New York
Studio Corner, 1980
Lithograph, 32 x 42 1/2 in.
Printed by Serge Lozingot
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.169

David Hockney
b. Bradford, England, 1937
Chair, 38 The Colony, Malibu, 1973
Lithograph, 23 x 19 in.
Printed by Kenneth Tyler
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.180

Bryan Hunt
b. Terra Haute, Indiana, 1947
Straight Falls, 1979
Etching, sugar-lift aquatint, soap-ground aquatint, and drypoint, 93 7/8 x 17 15/16 in. (overall two sheets)
Printed by David Kelso at Crown Point Press, Oakland (now San Francisco)
Published by Parasol Press, Ltd., New York
Crown Point Press Archive, Museum purchase, bequest of Sheldon G. Cooper in memory of Patricia Tobin Cooper
1991.28.216 a–b

Falls with Bend, 1979
Etching, sugar-lift aquatint, soap-ground aquatint, and drypoint, 93 7/8 x 17 15/16 in.
Printed by David Kelso at Crown Point Press, Oakland (now San Francisco)
Published by Parasol Press, Ltd., New York
Crown Point Press Archive, Museum purchase, bequest of Sheldon G. Cooper in memory of Patricia Tobin Cooper
1991.28.217 a–b

Jasper Johns
b. Augusta, Georgia, 1930
Two Flags (Black), 1970–1972
Lithograph (Field 165, ULAE 121), 31 1/2 x 23 in.
Printed by Bill Goldston
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions, West Islip, NY
1996.74.220

Sol LeWitt
b. Hartford, Connecticut, 1928
Six Geometric Figures and All Their Combinations Using Black Lines in Two Directions, vol. 1, 1980
Book with 63 etchings and aquatints, black on white (Tate E26), 8 7/8 x 9 1/16 in.
Printed by Hidekatsu Takada and Nancy Anello at Crown Point Press, Oakland (now San Francisco)
Published by Parasol Press, Ltd., New York
Crown Point Press Archive, gift of Crown Point Press
1992.167.1133.1–63

Six Geometric Figures and All Their Combinations Using White Lines in Two Directions, Vol. 2, 1980
Book with 63 etchings and aquatints, white on black, (Tate E26), 8 7/8 x 9 1/16 in.
Printed by Hidekatsu Takada and Nancy Anello at Crown Point Press, Oakland (now San Francisco)
Published by Parasol Press, Ltd., New York
Crown Point Press Archive, gift of Crown Point Press
1992.167.1134.1–63

Brice Marden

b. Bronxville, New York, 1938

Untitled (image a) from the portfolio *Five Plates*, 1973

Etching and aquatint (Lewison 23a),
40 3/16 x 29 3/4 in.

Printed by Patricia Branstead at Crown Point Press,
Oakland (now San Francisco)

Published by Parasol Press, Ltd., New York
Crown Point Press Archive, gift of Kathan Brown
1991.28.1026

Untitled (image c) from the portfolio

Five Plates, 1973

Etching and aquatint (Lewison 23c),
40 3/16 x 29 3/4 in.

Printed by Patricia Branstead at Crown Point Press,
Oakland (now San Francisco)

Published by Parasol Press, Ltd., New York
Crown Point Press Archive, gift of Kathan Brown
1991.28.1025

Untitled (image d) from the portfolio

Five Plates, 1973

Etching and aquatint (Lewison 23d),
40 3/16 x 29 3/4 in.

Printed by Patricia Branstead at Crown Point Press,
Oakland (now San Francisco)

Published by Parasol Press, Ltd., New York
Crown Point Press Archive, gift of Kathan Brown
1991.28.1027

Nathan Oliveira

b. Oakland, California, 1928

Untitled, pl. VII from the portfolio *To Edgar Allan Poe*

Lithograph, 30 3/16 x 22 3/8 in.

Printed by the artist

Published by Yankee Press, Stanford, California

1996.74.368.7

Tim Rollins + K.O.S.

b. Pittsfield, Maine, 1955

Plate I from the portfolio *The Temptation of St.*

Antony I–XIV, 1989

Spit-bite aquatint with steel wool burnishing on

Xerograph, printed on *chine collé*, 22 3/8 x 15 in.

Printed by Brian Shure

Published by Crown Point Press

Crown Point Press Archive, gift of Crown

Point Press

1992.167.820

Plate IV from the portfolio *The Temptation of*

St. Antony I–XIV, 1989

Aquatint and Xerox toner on Xerograph,

printed on *chine collé*, 22 1/4 x 14 15/16 in.

Printed by Brian Shure

Published by Crown Point Press

Crown Point Press Archive, gift of Crown

Point Press

1992.167.823

Richard Serra

b. San Francisco, California, 1939

Balance, 1972

Lithograph, 35 1/2 x 45 in.

Printed by Kenneth Tyler

Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles

William T. Wiley

b. Bedford, Indiana, 1937

NoWhere's That Blame Treaty, 1979

Soft-ground etching and aquatint with burnishing,
49 x 40 in.

Printed by Stephen Thomas

Published by Crown Point Press, Oakland
(now San Francisco)

Crown Point Press Archive, gift of Kathan Brown
1991.28.90

NoWhere's That Blame Treaty, 1983

Soft-ground etching, aquatint, and drypoint,
51 1/2 x 42 in.

Printed by Hidekatsu Takada

Published by Crown Point Press, Oakland
(now San Francisco)

Crown Point Press Archive, gift of Crown
Point Press

1992.167.1064

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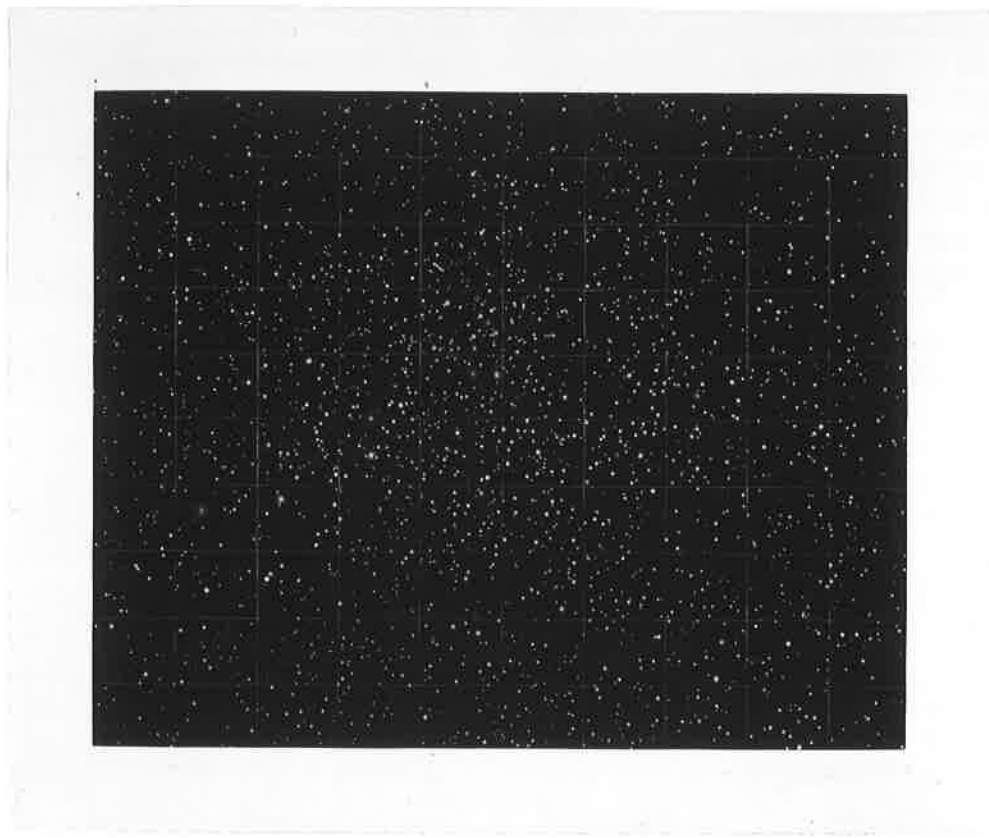
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Vija Celmins, *Strata*, 1982