

bernard jacobson gallery

Prints I wish I had published

11th January – 9th February 2019

In 1969 Bernard Jacobson opened his first London gallery; a fourth-floor walk-up on Mount Street, Mayfair dealing in prints by international stars, including Warhol and Oldenburg, as well as publishing prints by leading British artists including Malcolm Morley and Robyn Denny. Printmaking fitted the radical, pop-sensibility of the time and Jacobson was part of that heady explosion of interest in the medium.

While Jacobson would quickly go on to broaden the scope of the gallery, printmaking was its foundation and printmaking and print dealing remain at its heart. The gallery now holds the most comprehensive collection of Matisse prints of any commercial gallery in the world and regularly publishes and stages exhibitions of new print portfolios by artists including William Tillyer and Bruce McLean.

As the gallery approaches its half century in 2019, it is fitting that this landmark year opens with an ambitious 2-part exhibition exploring Jacobson's personal and abiding love of prints and some of the remarkable works published by the gallery during an eventful 50 years in the business. For Jacobson, printmaking has always been more than just a more accessible medium for collectors, although that is also a legitimate part of its appeal. Printmaking is a dynamic, expressive and diverse medium which offers the artist unique scope for innovation and experimentation.

These two exhibitions aren't intended to be exhaustive, although they do demonstrate the cornucopia of approaches and mark making offered by printmaking - they are a personal selection of some of Jacobson's favourites; a stunning collection of the prints he wished he had published and highlights from 50 years of the prints he did.

The Year opens with *Prints I wish I had published*, a masterclass of the huge range of approaches and techniques offered by printmaking. Featuring more than 30 artists, including some of the most important names in art from the past 600 years, this first exhibition is a rare opportunity to see some of the greatest works produced in the print medium.

Our selection of highlights from this feast of printmaking, opens chronologically with Albrecht Dürer's 15th Century woodcut, *The Deposition of Christ from the Large Passion* - one of a set of 12 woodcuts on the crucifixion and passion by the artist. Dürer is widely held to be one of the greatest printmakers of all time and this densely populated work with figures thronging around the prone figure of the Saviour

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and his grief-stricken mother, give us thrilling proof why. This is a work of intense detail and drama, rendered with technical verve and virtuosity.

Hiroshige, with his sumptuous coloured woodblock - ukiyo-e (pictures of the floating world), is one of the leading names of Japanese printmaking. The poetic and dreamlike *Cherry Blossoms at Honmoku in Masashi Provence*, from his 1858 series, *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* is a typical landscape by the master - which in turn, would go on to influence many European artists. Gauguin was one such, although in a style altogether hotter and more raw. Gauguin's woodcut *Noa Noa* (1893-94) was one of 10 works intended for a book project, *Noa Noa*, based on Gauguin's journals from Tahiti. The title refers to the gardenias worn by the Tahitian girls in the hair; "Téiné merahi noa noa (now very fragrant)".

Few artists have surpassed the confident line of David Hockney, particularly in the drawings and prints created in the 60s during the heady early days of his post-RCA success. The lithograph, *Figure by Curtain* (1964) is a humour-infused portrait of Hockney's first dealer, Kasmin, seemingly emerging on stage to take a bow in his trademark neat suit and dark framed glasses. If Hockney was the chronicler of the fashionable and often louche artistic figures of the 'swinging' pop generation, Ed Ruscha's work is rooted in the pared-down West Coast world of long vistas and empty horizons. *Made in California* (1971) is an iconic screen print from his word print and painting series, evoking the blazing sun and jaunty confidence that defines the Sunshine State.

Our selection here ends with William Tillyer, a sublime Yorkshire artist who we will return to in the second print exhibition. *Twelve Clouds* (1968) is an early zinc etching which just pre-dates the 50-year working relationship between Tillyer and Bernard Jacobson. It depicts with simplified, flattened forms, themes first worked in the conceptual installation, *Eight Clouds* (1968); a hard-soft reimagining of the North Yorkshire sky, created with bone white pebbles on dusky blue felt. Tillyer has long been energised by the act of print-making and has employed a dizzying array of techniques throughout his long career – most recently with the publication in 2018 of the folio of *À Rebours*, an edition of 52 prints inspired by Huysmans 19th Century novel.

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