

# bernard jacobson gallery

## Prints I published

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In 1969 Bernard Jacobson began his career as an art dealer, selling and publishing prints by important contemporary artists from a small fourth-floor gallery in London's Mayfair. For a gallery founded on printmaking and which continues to stage major print shows by artists including Matisse and Motherwell, what better way could there be to celebrate this half century than a two-part exhibition devoted to printmaking?

2019 opens with Jacobson's personal selection of important work from 6 centuries of printmaking, *'Prints I wish I had Published'* and now moves on to a selection of some of the highlights of the prints Jacobson *did* publish during his long career – and what a selection it is. When Jacobson began in 1969, printmaking was enjoying an explosion of interest and was a medium of choice for a whole generation of artists on both sides of the Atlantic, including Andy Warhol and Peter Blake. Jacobson found himself entirely in the right place at the right time and this exhibition is a glorious journey through the five decades which were to follow.

Screenprinting dominates the earlier works here and it was a process particularly fitted to the aesthetic of the 60s and 70s; it delivers flat, bold washes of colour and was perfect for rendering the simplified photographic images at the heart of both the Pop and Photorealist movements prevalent at the time. Malcolm Morley's photorealist *Horses* by (1969) was the first print to be published by the gallery and was created by an artist variously described as the best painter of his generation (Salvador Dali) and as *"the last wild man of modern art"* (Robert Hughes). This pastoral depiction of a foal with his mare in an impossibly verdant setting has something altogether unsettling about it; the green overheated – the sunshine as it radiates down on the horses, almost nuclear.

*Privacy Plot: Flower Garden* (1970) by the British artist, Ivor Abrahams is a print from one of the numerous folios by the artist to be published by Jacobson, part of an ongoing series based on that most English of subjects - the garden – created using illustrations from popular gardening magazines. Like Morley however, there is nothing genteel about the way Abrahams renders these ordered urban scenes; they are transformed by eye popping, flat areas of colour which vividly communicate the artist's interest in the relationship between nature, artifice and art.

As well as colour, screenprinting offered artists the opportunity to make prints on a much bigger scale than other methods. At over a metre across, Patrick Caulfield's *Two Whiting*

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(1972) - from the aptly titled folio *14 BIG PRINTS* fully exploited this quality, as well as adding an unusual oval 'mount' for the printed image to float in. Howard Hodgkin favoured an altogether more dense, layered and abstracted approach, for his large, hand coloured lithograph *For Bernard Jacobson* (1979). Unlike Caulfield's print, this work is all dark, brooding colour with a 'window' of damson ink, applied with strong gestures framing and containing it all.

In the midst of all this colour, we also find moments of quiet contemplation and restrained hues, Leon Kossoff's, *Outside Kilburn Underground* (1984) is from an ongoing series created around the artist's home and studio in London. The Kilburn of the 80s pictured here is a very different place to the London of 2019, where even once gritty communities have been transformed by the property boom. Kossoff's Kilburn has a sense of community but it is also dark and claustrophobic– the layered and scratchy lines of the etching, perfectly describing the physical act of observational drawing from which it sprang.

Ed Ruscha's print *I'm Amazed* (1972) also demonstrates a sense of physical mark-making, but this time light as the air which seem to carry the serried 'beads' of colour as they spin out into the 'cosmos' of the picture plane to reveal the words of the title. If Ruscha's subject is the everyday stuff of contemporary Americana, for the British artist, William Tillyer it is usually something altogether older, rooted in a British Romantic tradition while also acknowledging a conceptual notion of the artifice of art and nature.

*Living in Arcadia* (1991) is a highly unusual Intaglio print by Tillyer, produced using a tactile, embossed technique to create depth and texture which is reminiscent of the layered and complex surfaces of his paintings. While Arcadia is often used to describe the sublime and pastoral, as used by Tillyer in this print, it might be but a step away from Ruscha; *Living In Arcadia* was produced during a particularly productive visit by the artist to the experimental studios of Mixografia in Los Angeles.

There is so much to enjoy in both these historic exhibitions, staged to open the landmark 50th year at Bernard Jacobson Gallery. The almost 600 years of prints on view remind us that printmaking offers unlimited visual and creative possibilities – from Albrecht Durer's austere Christ in the 1st exhibition, to William Tillyer's voluptuous vision of Arcadia in this last.

## **PRESS ENQUIRIES**

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