

# **Prints in parts since 1970 : the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Tatyana Grosman Gallery, March 22-July 15, 1990**

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PRINTS IN

P A R T S

SINCE 1970



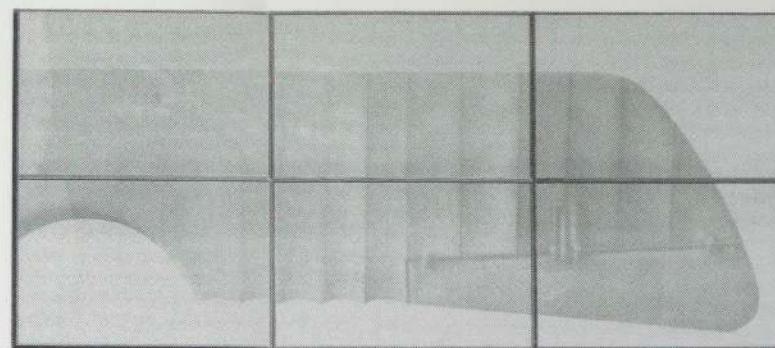
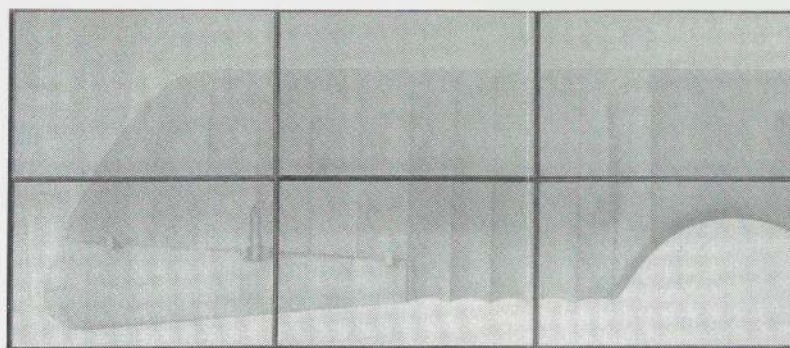
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

The Tatyana Grosman Gallery

March 22—July 17, 1990



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Vito Acconci. *2 Wings for Wall and Person*. 1979–81. (Photo: Carmen McRae)

**M**ore and more, contemporary artists working in every medium are creating works comprised of plural surfaces or parts. Drawing from the Museum's collection, this exhibition presents sixteen such projects in various print mediums, produced by American and European artists over the past two decades. The artists represented are well known for their painting, sculpture, photography, environmental installation, and performance activities. This selection focuses on their choice of printmaking to explore three subjects: the nature of personal freedom, systems of cultural communication, and the relationship of abstract forms to their environment.

The late German artist Joseph Beuys often used the vertical diptych to display ideas he intended to teach or perform. In *Display Boards for Instruction I and II* (1971), Beuys fabricated two scenes in the marshes of Ostend, Belgium, on the western coast of the Eurasian continent. On the diptych's upper panel he collaged a sulfur-daubed printing plate from a Japanese magazine article about his work onto a photograph of a cube-shaped building. The lower panel is a photograph of a bunker in a swamp, from which a transmitter "beams" a text Beuys inscribed in the upper panel: "the cube building contains a blood sausage carved into the form of a Samurai sword." The disruption of the marsh's ecosystem became for Beuys a symbol of ecological ruin that can result from human intervention and a failure of intercultural cooperation. He issued this print in a large edition, as a graphic communiqué.

During 1979–81, Vito Acconci created a human-scale mural, *2 Wings for Wall and Person*. Airplane wings, printed on six sheets each, are hung with enough space between them for a person to stand. Photoetching makes the wings appear like those of an actual plane, an effect Acconci counters by printing them in a formula color for flesh: their bird-like contour and flesh hue liken them to living membrane. In earlier, more adversarial pieces that linked art with sex and violence, Acconci induced his audience to

join in his performances. In *2 Wings for Wall and Person*, he asks his viewers to escape from traditional viewing habits by "imbedding themselves in the piece." \* The inherent flatness of the composite print points to its dependence on the wall, while its composition suggests flight activated by human entry. This work, among similar print projects, led Acconci to develop what he calls mobile, "person-usable" sculptures.

Hamish Fulton, a British artist known for his extended walks, has developed an action-based art in the natural environment. He has frequently made text-inscribed photographs that record the revelatory moments of his trips. *Porcupine*, a vertical triptych made in 1982 after a seven-day walk in Northern California, was Fulton's first nonphotographic print. In this etching, the artist printed single lines of text over washes of pale color, used a soft etching ground to make impressions from collected pine needles, and framed the triptych with a red aquatint border running along the edges of each sheet. *Porcupine* reads both as a vertical scan of the sky, foliage, animals, and snow-covered earth, and as the flat, patterned plane that met Fulton's gaze as he navigated the winter ground surface. The red border refers to his tracking the path of a wounded porcupine.

Another group of artists in this exhibit have created work about the use of word and image in twentieth-century culture. In Barbara Kruger's untitled nine-part print (1985), displayed in red frames in a linear or square arrangement, each sheet contains one word. In sequence, the mosaic of images with text reads: "We will no longer be seen and not heard." Kruger paired each of these words with a photograph of a person signing—using a language for the deaf. Drawing from her earlier career experience in advertising layout, she used a variety of typefaces and compositional techniques. Kruger selected a palette of bright, acidic, and metallic colors and shows people whose appearance recalls the mass media from a time when counter-cultural behavior received less attention

than now. Kruger's interest in feminist and other social issues is expressed, in this project, in a salvo for self-liberation.

From the barrios of Los Angeles Allen Ruppersberg borrowed the colorful format of cheap street posters advertising popular events to create a ten-piece lithograph called *Preview* (1988). He reproduced the lurid, fluorescent color scheme of the posters and laid a blatant text across color bands in each panel to emphasize his statements. Ruppersberg snags his viewer's attention with such questions as WHAT SHOULD I DO? and slogans like IT'S NOT ART (THAT COUNTS NOW). Referring alternately to personal emotional distress or distraction and to recent art, Ruppersberg's *Preview* is a harbinger of a breakdown in communication and, ultimately, of cultural paralysis.

In 1982 Jasper Johns created a horizontal triptych, *Voice 2*. Using stencils, he printed the fractured letters of the title across the lower half of the three panels, marking the panels' edges with different colored dots to indicate possible sequences. Johns thinks of this triptych as forming a cylinder, and as such it can read normally, VOICE 2, or beginning with the middle or end of the word. Because the prints are displayed on a wall, the cylindrical form is only implied. Johns deployed his lettering in an ambiguous gestural field of liquid tusche that imparts a fluidity echoed by the floating word. Arrows run vertically, horizontally, or diagonally against the flow of text, and are sometimes coupled with references to a fork, which, when in use, impedes the flow of spoken words. Johns's circular and contradictory meanings reflect his interest in mental and verbal expression.

Daniel Buren has long been at the forefront of investigating architectural environments with abstract works. In 1978–79 he created a fragmented, mural sized print called *Framed/Exploded/De-faced*. Buren began by making an etching with vertical stripes of equal width, alternating between color aquatint and embossed white stripes. He then divided each print into twenty-five equal



Ellsworth Kelly. *Saint Martin Triptych* from the *Saint Martin Series*. 1984. (Photo: © Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles, California, 1984)



squares, trimming ("defacing") them to fit into eight-inch square frames. To accentuate his belief that the framing of artworks often involves insensitive choices, Buren controlled his striped print fragments by carefully framing each of them. Installed, *Framed/Exploded/Defaced* spreads out ("explodes") to cover an entire wall, in five even rows and columns. If architectural features or another artist's work interrupt the placement of the fragments, those fragments are left out. Buren capitalizes on the features of the exhibition environment to point out how it structures our perceptions.

In contrast to Buren's piece, Günther Förg's *Room (Raum)* of 1987 is intended for display in a three-dimensional space, covering more than one wall in a room. Modeling these prints after an earlier series of paintings, Förg used lithographic tusche in a painterly, coloristic manner to create twelve impressions. More interested in exploring the classical vocabulary of lithography than in its mechanical printing, Förg left that stage of production to the printer. When installed on adjacent walls, the twelve panels of *Room* produce a synthesized abstract environment, transforming the chamber that is its venue.

After using plural panel formats in his paintings for many years, in 1984 Ellsworth Kelly created his first multisheet print, *Saint Martin Triptych*. Named after an island in the West Indies, this triptych evolved from another print project. Kelly first created patterns on four aluminum plates. By masking parts of these plates he derived a series of individual shaped lithographs, naming each after a beach on Saint Martin. On the plates, Kelly introduced textures that extended his abstract vocabulary distilled from natural forms. Incorporating chance, he guided the printers but did not dictate the gestures necessary to produce plates of brushwork, crosshatching, and blotted cloth, and accidentally stepped on one plate himself. This random process was analogous to the constant changing and weathering of surfaces in a beach terrain. Kelly's eventual decision to combine the textured plates into a vast composite made *Saint Martin Triptych* into an abstract environment, one that conjures up an expanse of island landscape.

Artists such as Beuys and Kruger have made composite images that construct arguments without using narrative. Others, such as Ruppersberg, Johns, Buren, and Kelly, have combined visual clues that, when assembled or scanned, send a variety of complex signals. Most of the artists in this exhibition have created their work with the participation of the viewer in mind. Collectively, the projects exploit the printed surface and its display to invite speculation about contemporary life, about its surface aspects, and what supports or is behind them.

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Department of Prints and Illustrated Books

\*From a gallery talk given by Vito Acconci on the occasion of a retrospective of his prints at Landfall Press, New York, February 15, 1990.

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# C H E C K L I S T

All works, except for the exhibited piece by Barbara Kruger, are from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art. Dates enclosed in parentheses do not appear on the works. Unless otherwise indicated, dimensions are for the single sheets comprising each work, in inches and centimeters, height preceding width.

**Vito Acconci** American, born 1940

*2 Wings for Wall and Person*. Oakland, California, Crown Point Press, 1979–81. Photoetching, printed in color on twelve sheets, each 25 5/8 x 40 1/8" (65.1 x 101.9 cm). Gift of Crown Point Press in celebration of its 25th anniversary.

**Dotty Attie** American, born 1938

*No Teeth*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University, 1989. Photolithograph, printed in color on six sheets, die-cut and collaged, each 6 1/4 x 6" (15.9 x 15.2 cm). Elinor and Edmund Grasheim Annual Fund.

**John Baldessari** American, born 1931

*Black Dice*. New York, Peter Blum Edition, (1982). Photoetching, soft ground etching, sugar lift aquatint, and drypoint, printed in color on nine sheets, each 16 1/2 x 19 3/4" (41.9 x 50.2 cm), and one photograph (film still), 8 1/16 x 9 3/16" (20.5 x 23.4 cm). John B. Turner Fund.

**Jennifer Bartlett** American, born 1941

*In the Garden #190*. New York, the artist and Simca Print Artists, 1982. Serigraph and woodcut, printed in color on two sheets, each 17 1/4 x 22 3/4" (43.8 x 57.8 cm). Gift of Barbara Pine.

**Joseph Beuys** German, 1921–1986

*Display Boards for Instruction I and II*. Heidelberg, Edition Staack, (1971). Two photographs, pen and ink, with zinc printing plate collage and sulfur additions, each 32 1/8 x 40 3/8" (81.6 x 102.5 cm). Gift of the Cosmopolitan Arts Foundation.

**Daniel Buren** French, born 1938

*Framed/Exploded/Defaced*. Oakland, California, Crown Point Press, (1978–79). Aquatint, printed in color on twenty-five sheets, each frame 8 x 8 x 5/8" (20.3 x 20.3 x 1.6 cm). Gift of Crown Point Press in celebration of its 25th anniversary.

**Günther Förg** German, born 1952

*Room (Raum)*. Frankfurt, Galerie Grässlin-Ehrhardt, 1987. Twelve lithographs, printed in color or in black, each 28 1/4 x 20 3/8" (71.7 x 51.7 cm). Walter Bareiss Fund.

**Hamish Fulton** British, born 1946

*Porcupine*. Oakland, California, Crown Point Press, (1982). Soft ground etching and aquatint, printed in color on three sheets, upper and lower 30 3/4 x 22 13/16" (78.1 x 57.9 cm), center 31 3/4 x 22 13/16" (80.6 x 57.9 cm). Gift of Crown Point Press in celebration of its 25th anniversary.

**Jasper Johns** American, born 1930

*Voice 2*. West Islip, New York, Universal Limited Art Editions, 1982. Lithograph, printed in color on three sheets, each 36 x 24 5/8" (91.4 x 62.5 cm). Gift of Celeste Bartos.

**Ellsworth Kelly** American, born 1923

*Saint Martin Triptych* from the *Saint Martin Series*. Los Angeles, Gemini G.E.L., (1984). Lithograph on three sheets, left 58 x 51 15/16" (147.3 x 131.9 cm), center and right 55 15/16 x 51 15/16" (142.1 x 131.9 cm). Jeanne C. Thayer Fund.

**Barbara Kruger** American, born 1945

Untitled. New York, Peter Blum Edition, 1985. Photolithograph, lithograph, serigraph, and embossing, printed in color or in black on nine sheets, each frame 21 9/16 x 21 5/16 x 1 1/2" (54.8 x 54.1 x 3.8 cm). Lent by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase with funds from the Print Committee. Example reproduced here, The Museum of Modern Art, The Charles A. Dana Foundation Fund.

**Barry Le Va** American, born 1941

*Installation Floor Plan for Any Space Surrounded by Four Walls* (1974) from the *Rubber Stamp Portfolio*. New York, Parasol Press, Ltd., (1976). Rubber stamp, printed in black or in color on two sheets, each 8 x 8" (20.3 x 20.3 cm). Gift of Parasol Press, Ltd., and the Publications Department of The Museum of Modern Art.

**Elizabeth Murray** American, born 1940

Untitled. New York, the artist and Simca Print Artists, (1982). Serigraph, printed in color on three sheets, upper (irregular) 18 x 29 3/8" (45.7 x 74.7 cm), center (irregular) 21 1/4 x 32 1/4" (54 x 81.9 cm), lower (irregular) 20 x 30 3/8" (50.8 x 77.1 cm). Given anonymously.

**Joan Nelson** American, born 1958

Untitled. New York, Solo Press, 1986. Lithograph with acrylic and pigment additions on two sheets, each 13 5/8 x 13 1/2" (34.6 x 34.3 cm). Gift of Nancy and Arnold Smoller in honor of Emanuel and Esta Josephs.

**Robert Rauschenberg** American, born 1925

*Treaty*. West Islip, New York, Universal Limited Art Editions, 1974. Lithograph, printed in color on two sheets, each 27 1/16 x 40 1/16" (68.6 x 101.7 cm). Gift of Celeste Bartos.

**Allen Ruppersberg** American, born 1944

*Preview*. Chicago, Landfall Press, 1988. Lithograph, printed in color on ten sheets, each 22 1/16 x 13 13/16" (56 x 35.1 cm). John B. Turner Fund.

Cover: Barbara Kruger. *Untitled*. 1985. (Photo: Mali Olatunji)