

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## The Museum of Modern Art

VIVID EXAMPLES OF INTERNATIONAL POP ART PRINTMAKING ON VIEW IN NEW EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

**Pop Impressions Europe/USA:  
Prints and Multiples from The Museum of Modern Art  
February 18-May 18, 1999**

A new exhibition exploring the complementary relationship between the international Pop art movement and the medium of printmaking opens February 18 at The Museum of Modern Art. *Pop Impressions Europe/USA: Prints and Multiples from The Museum of Modern Art* presents some 90 works from the Museum's collection that highlight the pivotal role played by printed art in the Pop aesthetic. Works by well-known American artists such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and Robert Indiana are shown alongside European contributions by Richard Hamilton, Eduardo Paolozzi, Martial Raysse, and Gerhard Richter. Organized thematically, the exhibition addresses some of the prevailing iconographic threads that preoccupied Pop artists, including mass media, consumer culture, politics, and erotica.

Pop's early development in Europe and the United States coincided with a resurgence of interest in printed art. The recycling of media imagery, embrace of industrial technologies, and populist ideas about art that characterized Pop meshed perfectly with the multiple nature, low production costs, and commercial mediums associated with printmaking. At the same time, a number of new screenprint workshops arose in Europe and the United States to cater to artists' growing demand to work in this previously commercial medium.

"Pop printmaking evolved from an intermingling of conceptual ideas and technical means. It also inspired a reevaluation of the medium as a fertile tool for vanguard artistic thinking," says Wendy Weitman, Associate Curator, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, who organized the exhibition.

### **Proto-Pop**

In the mid-1950s, artists such as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Daniel Spoerri, and Christo rejected the abstract style favored at the time, instead taking objects from everyday life as their subject matter. Johns's *Flag I* (1960) turned a familiar patriotic symbol into an art object. Christo used found objects to raise questions about the nature of art and artistic authorship, as in *Look Magazine Empaqueté* (Wrapped Look Magazine) (1965), a multiple made from issues of *Look* magazine wrapped in plastic and tied with cord.

### **Mass Media**

The economic prosperity of the 1950s brought about a boom in the media industry; magazine numbers increased and color reproductions became commonplace in printed advertisements. As Pop developed, the media's influence became increasingly apparent, as items such as advertisements, comic strips, movie stills, postcards, magazine and newspaper

photographs, and television began to play a dominant role in artists' creative thinking. Richard Hamilton created *My Marilyn* (1966) from a collage of Marilyn Monroe's rejected publicity stills, while Robert Indiana's iconic *Love* (1967) was initially conceived as a Christmas card design for The Museum of Modern Art, published in 1965. Its boldface, stenciled letters had the visual impact of an advertisement or logo, and the image reached millions when it was reproduced as an eight-cent U. S. postage stamp in 1973, becoming a mass-produced commodity itself.

### Consumer Culture

A surge of new consumer products appeared in the 1950s and was accompanied by new and more aggressive advertising techniques. The rise of the self-service supermarket necessitated a fresh focus on signature packaging. American Pop artists responded with frequent depictions of packaging and logos seen in the marketplace and the media. Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Can on a Shopping Bag* (1964), an edition of shopping bags printed with the quintessential Pop image, epitomized the consumer society of the 1960s, while in the more pointed screenprint *S&H Green Stamps* (1965) Warhol depicted an actual currency of the commodity culture.

Food products became a defining aspect of American life at this time, in conjunction with the development of fast-food chains, brand-name labels, and giant supermarkets. In *Sandwich and Soda*, from the portfolio *X+X (Ten Works by Ten Painters)* (1964), Roy Lichtenstein streamlined a newspaper advertisement and screenprinted the image in red and blue on a clear plastic background. This print exemplifies the kind of experimentation that shattered the conventions of printmaking, making Pop one of the most inventive periods in the medium's history.

The growth of the suburbs and the construction of nationwide highway networks in the 1950s focused new attention on the automobile. Aggressive advertising by the automobile industry followed suit, appropriated by Ed Ruscha and Allan D'Arcangelo in their imagery of corporate gasoline logos and the endless American highway. Ruscha's stylized depiction of the gasoline station in *Standard Station* (1966), with its cinematic composition and theatrical colors, was his first published screenprint and is one of the signature images of the Pop period.

### Politics

During the period of political turmoil in the 1960s, printmaking offered the ideal vehicle for many artists to focus their interpretations of events. In the etching *Drag--Johnson and Mao* (1967), Jim Dine portrayed oversized images of the faces of then-President Lyndon B. Johnson and Chairman Mao Tse Tung wearing garish makeup. Eduardo Arroyo's *Notas para Guernica (Notes from Guernica)* (1970) depicts the black tails of three German planes bearing swastikas as a statement against the bombing of the Basque city of Guernica. Gerhard Richter also used airplane imagery at a time when the issue of German re-armament was being hotly debated. *Flugzeug I (Airplane I)* (1966) appears blurry and out of focus, emulating the hazy look of mass-produced newspaper photographs.

### Erotica

One of the defining social changes of the 1960s was the radical liberalization of sexual mores. By the end of the decade, eroticism had become a dominant motif in popular culture, and erotic imagery appeared frequently in Pop. Claes Oldenburg's *London Knees 1966* (published 1968) isolates and objectifies a section of a woman's legs from mid-thigh to mid-calf, calling attention to the British fashion style of miniskirts and go-go boots. Martial Raysse concentrates on depictions of feminine

stereotypes in popular magazines. His untitled screenprint from the illustrated book *das grosse buch* (1963, published 1964), depicting a woman's face printed in Day-Glo colors symbolizes the artificiality of ideal beauty promoted through the media.

*Pop Impressions Europe/USA: Prints and Multiples from The Museum of Modern Art*, written by Wendy Weitman, is \$24.95, available in the MoMA Bookstore, and distributed in the United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York.

The accompanying publication is made possible by the Contemporary Exhibition Fund of The Museum of Modern Art, established with gifts from Lily Auchincloss, Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, and Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder.

The accompanying brochure is made possible by The Contemporary Arts Council and The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art.

Additional support is provided by Marc A. Schwartz and Lee and Ann Fensterstock.

No. 14

[press office](#) [menu](#)

©1998 The Museum of Modern Art, New York