

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

NO. 56
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

RIVA CASTLEMAN, DIRECTOR OF TECHNICS AND CREATIVITY: SELECTIONS FROM GEMINI G.E.L.

Miss Riva Castleman, Associate Curator of The Museum of Modern Art, has been directly involved in the presentation of over 15 print and illustrated book exhibitions since she joined the Museum in 1963. Technics and Creativity: Selections from Gemini G.E.L. (Graphics Editions Limited), which opened May 5 (on view from May 5 through July 6) under Miss Castleman's direction, has proven to be most provocative and, in some instances, a controversial exhibition. The exhibition of 84 works from the Los Angeles workshop of Gemini G.E.L. includes three dimensional sculptures and wall pieces produced as multiples as well as a comprehensive selection of lithographs -- all the products of the new liaisons between art and industry. Industry is now involved in the arts as a collaborator, bringing with it the supportive technology long taken for granted in almost every sphere of modern life.

Josef Albers' Embossed Linear Construction, on view in the exhibition, represents the first use of computers in art. A programmer reduced the drawing to digital tape which electronically activated an automatic engraving mill to incise the mirror image of the drawing onto an aluminum plate. The variable was the profile of the line to be engraved.

Then there's the Ice Bag, the largest sculpture ever produced in multiple. Under its ice bag cap and pleated silver neoprene bag, Claes Oldenburg's 12 foot in diameter Ice Bag has beautifully engineered motor-operated gears, which make Ice Bag undulate through 16 programmed movements every 2-3/4 minutes. From the moment the Museum opens in the morning, the sculpture is surrounded by the admiring, indignant, amused and the bemused.

Robert Rauschenberg was one of the artists invited by N.A.S.A. to commemorate man's flight to the moon. From that experience came his Stoned Moon series of lithographs. Utilizing every lithographic technique, it commemorates technology through technology.

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In Riva Castleman's book, Technics and Creativity: Gemini G.E.L., she tells how Gemini solved one of lithography's greatest problems: how to keep up with the trend towards greater scale in art when a lithographic stone 35" high x 50" wide x 3" deep, weighing 350 pounds had always been moved by men. The long apprentice system which enabled young men to develop the strength needed was impracticable considering the protracted length of the typical American education. For the first time a hydraulic press was developed (by Gemini Director, Ken Tyler) and a ball grained aluminum plate now simulates the effect of lithographic stone in many instances. Technology was also enlisted to develop new inks and methods of registration -- and a paper with a "friendly feel".

"Long before Gutenberg, man had a desire to convey ideas through identical visual material. Perhaps the earliest successful instance was cuneiform, wherein the characters were all incised with the same tool, thus creating a uniform set of impressions. Seals signified authority because of their ability always to form the same image. The impressions of seals are, broadly, the first prints. Where this technique of consistently transferring the same image is unknown, people are unaware that two truly identical things can exist. Too, if it is unknown, no sophisticated monetary systems can be established, nor, more basically, can any form of economics exist that depends on, not simply similarity, but exact equality. Much of the history of technology is the history of man's persistence in trying to make perfectly identical objects."

-- Riva Castleman, Technics and Creativity: Gemini G.E.L.

Miss Castleman is a congenial and poised conversationalist and has addressed large gatherings. Miss Castleman was born in Chicago and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. She has been the recipient of several fellowships, the Curator of The California Historical Society, has aided in the selection of American works for overseas exhibitions and has written many articles.

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Technics and Creativity: Gemini G.E.L., with a text by Riva Castleman is heavily illustrated with 364 photographs of which 20 are in full color, and is published by The Museum of Modern Art. The book comes in a white plastic box. On the inside lid of the box is an especially commissioned multiple by Jasper Johns, Target 1970. The multiple, which can be removed from the case, is a two-color offset lithography in a bullseye design. A small paint brush and three chips of watercolor paint are attached under the bullseye. The work is signed Japser Johns and _____, inviting the owner to collaborate with Johns in creating his own version of Target 1970.

Additional information, pictures and slides available from Joan Wallace, Coordinator of Press Services and Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St, New York, NY 10019. Telephone: (212) 956-7297; -7501.
