

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
January 1986

Born in 1945 in Minnesota, Bill Jensen studied fine arts at the University

BILL JENSEN/FIRST ETCHINGS

January 16 - March 4, 1986

An exhibition of the first etchings by abstract painter Bill Jensen opens at The Museum of Modern Art on January 16, 1986. Organized by Deborah Wye, associate curator in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, BILL JENSEN/FIRST ETCHINGS features prints Jensen executed at the renowned print workshop of Universal Limited Art Editions, West Islip, New York.

The exhibition is comprised of twenty prints, made between 1983 and 1985. Highlights include Jensen's first published etching, Studio, and several subsequent prints, all of which evoke the artist's intensely spiritual and emotionally charged style of painting. In addition, the recently published portfolio, Endless, made up of eleven etchings on carefully chosen tonalities of specially made papers, reveals Jensen's images as elements in the vocabulary of an evolving language. Forty-nine examples of trial proofs and early states for Jensen's portfolio are included and demonstrate the unique qualities inherent in making prints.

Jensen's paintings are characterized by extensive overpainting, consisting of layers of images and brushstrokes on the canvas. In etching, he discovered a similar potential from the matrix of copperplate, which can hold all the memories of an artist's reworkings.

With abstraction, Jensen explores certain realms of the inner life. His etchings evoke spirituality, sexuality, nature, the cosmos, and even magic. Wye wrote in the exhibition catalog, "This is an invented world which pulsates with feelings that relate to real life without depicting it."

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Born in 1945 in Minnesota, Bill Jensen studied fine arts at the University of Minnesota in the late sixties and moved to New York in 1970. His mature work became known in the early years of this decade, when his intense, intimately-sized paintings made a significant impact on the contemporary scene. "Jensen's work brings what might nostalgically be thought of as a lost sanctuary, protected from the cacophony of everyday experience, to the forefront of our consciousness," according to Wye.

Jensen was invited to work at ULAE in 1982. He hesitated at the prospect of working in unknown mediums in the celebrated print shop founded by Tatyana Grosman where artists of an earlier generation had made some of their most important prints. After almost a year of postponements, Jensen went to West Islip in March 1983. Collaborating with John Lund, the master printmaker who introduced him to the technical possibilities of etching, Jensen acquired as many intaglio processes as possible and invented others. The trial proofs and progressive states of Jensen's plates presented in the exhibition serve as a visual diary of his artistic process, which is characterized by a slow evolution of images. From his experience in etching at ULAE, Jensen's prints have become thoroughly integrated with his paintings and drawings. Now all function organically in his studio in what he refers to as a "working oneness."

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For further information or photographic materials, contact Jeanne Collins or Jessica Schwartz, Department of Public Information 212/708-9750.