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PUBLICATION OF 60 YEARS OF NORTH AMERICAN PRINTS 1947-2007

September 2009 marks the publication date of *60 Years of North American Prints* by David Acton, a hardcover history of the Boston Printmakers and their long tradition of promoting and presenting contemporary prints. This 200 page, full-color volume chronicles the growth and expansion of the print medium since 1947 through sixty prints carefully selected by David Acton to represent the best award-winning prints and purchases from sixty years of Boston Printmakers exhibitions. Acton describes these exemplary works as “astute and flawless impressions made by some of the finest printmakers working in drastically changing times.” Each illustrated print is accompanied by Acton’s essay on the artist and the art. The book also contains historical essays, a chronology of the Boston Printmakers, and a listing of all artists who have exhibited in their national juried exhibitions over the last sixty years.

David Acton has been Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs at the Worcester Art Museum since 1986. He has written numerous books on American prints, which include *The Stamp of Impulse: Abstract Expressionist Prints*, *A Spectrum of Innovation: Color in American Printmaking*, and the monograph *The Hand of a Craftsman: The Woodcut Technique of Gustave Baumann*. In 2004 he produced the exhibition and book entitled *Keeping Shadows: Photography at the Worcester Art Museum*, and has written extensively on old master prints throughout his career.

David Acton writes: “In 1947 a group of student printmakers in Boston came together to share information and investigate exhibition opportunities. They enlisted the support of faculty sponsors, Otis Philbrick of Massachusetts College of Art and Turé BÉngtz of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, who would become the organization’s mainstays when the students moved on to their professional careers. In 1948 the Boston Printmakers mounted their first exhibition on the fourth floor of Paine Furniture Company in downtown Boston. The show had a New England orthodoxy, for most of its prints looked back to traditions of book illustration and the Etching Revival at a time of avant-garde experimentation in American printmaking. Soon the organization and its shows were among the leading venues for academic printmaking. They attracted artists who undertook every phase of the creative process themselves. Many had been teachers who valued talent and virtuosity above fashionable taste. Moderation accompanied a principled democracy and the exhibitions remained open to all and judged by peers. The Boston Printmakers’ Annual Exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts were among the most prestigious print shows of the 1950s and 1960s. Thirty years of unprecedented popularity followed for fine arts prints, waning only with the ascent of electronic media. *60 Years of North American Prints* celebrates the role of the Boston Printmakers in establishing its place in the art world during a dynamic period of American art. Furthermore, its lively

membership assures a distinguished future for the organization through its ambitious projects and ever-widening sphere of influence.

“By 1990 the [Boston Printmakers] North American Print Exhibition had become one of the oldest and most important national print competitions, along with the International Print and Drawing Exhibition at Bradley University, and shows sponsored by the Philadelphia Print Club, and the Los Angeles Printmaking Society.”

“Programs of international outreach are just the latest to reflect the Boston Printmakers’ inclination to explore new processes and cultural practices along with their enduring respect for tradition. The organization’s diverse activities parallel the physical multiplicity of editioned works of original art. Printmaking is unusual among pictorial media for its time-consuming, technically-demanding processes. Its considerable requirements of tools, equipment and materials created a tradition of community and collaboration absent from painting and sculpture. Prints that emerge as superior are often those that display technical skill combined with considered or heartfelt imagery, along with an expressive vitality belying a long and potentially stultifying creative process. In an era of American optimism, these complex issues prompted the Boston Printmakers to organize themselves on broad academic foundations. The organization emerged as one that combines fellowship with the rules of the print shop. Throughout its history, many of its members have been teachers with deep responsibilities to combine technical instruction with the generous impulse to share. So long as the camaraderie of workshop and classroom distinguish the graphic arts, the compulsion to reach out to fellow artists across the country and around the world guarantees a future of promise for the Boston Printmakers.”

Clifford S. Ackley (Chair, Department of Prints, Drawings and Photographs and Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) writes in a preview of *Sixty Years of North American Prints*:

“The Boston Printmakers organization, its founders and dedicated volunteer staff and their exhibitions from their beginnings in 1947 to the present day [have evolved] from a deeply committed, but relatively conservative, group of black-and white intaglio printmakers through the introduction of large-scale color prints, collaborative printmaking, and digital imagery to today’s more globally-minded organization that arranges excursions of printmakers to China and Vietnam. [The recent publication] is an original, and much-needed, historical record of printmaking workshops in the Boston area from the late 1950s to the present. In addition, it provides the reader with detailed, carefully documented biographies and analyses of individual technique for 60 creative printmakers, such diverse artistic personalities as Ture B ngtz, George Lockwood, Carol Summers, Karen Kunc, Michael Mazur, Deborah Cornell and Andrew Raftery. It is an essential book for any library or reader seriously concerned with contemporary American printmaking.”

The book is available from the Boston Printmakers at their website, www.bostonprintmakers.org, or at their South End exhibition, *Making Connections: Contemporary Cuban Printmakers*, at the Laconia Gallery, 433 Harrison Avenue, Boston from October 2 through November 22, 2009.

High-resolution images from *60 Years of North American Prints* are available for download under Press at www.bostonprintmakers.org or by email from mifa@verizon.net.

60 Years of North American Prints: List of 60 Featured Artists

Sigmund Abeles, Richard C. Bartlett, David Becker, Ture B ngtz, Martha Jane Bradford, David Bumbeck, Calvin Burnett, James D. Butler, Letterio Calapai, Charles Cave, Minna Citron, Warrington Colescott, Ann Conner, Deborah Cornell, Allan Rohan Crite, Aline Feldman, Sergio Gonzalez-Tornero, Robert E Grady, Arthur W. Heintzleman, Jacques Hnizdovsky, Sidney Hurwitz, Billy Morrow Jackson, Constance Jacobson, Kenneth A. Kerslake, Misch Kohn, V in  Kola, Karen Kunc, Clare Leighton, George Lockwood, Wilfred Loring, Michael Mazur, Stephen McMillan, Peter Milton, Gordon Mortensen, Thomas Nason, Robert A. Nelson, Christie Long Nuell, Katja Oxman, Elizabeth Peak, Margaret Elder Philbrick, Otis Phibrick, Linda Plotkin, Clayton Pond, Andrew Rafferty, P.J. Rogers, Elizabeth Saltonstall, Masaaki Sato, Alfred Sessler, Herlinde Spahr, Donald Stoltenberg, Carol Summers, Janet Turner, Nora Unwin, S.M. (Sam) Walker, William Walmsley, Carol Wax, Art Werger, Theo Wujcik, Stow Wengenroth, Fran oise Zigher

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L'Araignée, 1963, detail of an etching by Minna Citron (1896-1991)