

Report from University of Calgary-Three Week Workshop in Lithography and Serigraphy

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held in July 1969 with Andrew Stasik, Pratt Graphic Centre, New York

by Shirley Raphael

An important factor on the art scene today is Canadian universities. They are providing the logical place for experiment; university galleries where famous and non-famous or promising artists can show their work, and many have started to build impressive permanent collections. They are also employing strong painter-teachers, who, although they may have a relatively short tenure on campus, leave a strong and continuous influence on their students. The universities, for the most part, are in new suburban developments, and the newer ones have bright, airy studios with all the best equipment and facilities. Such is the case at the University of Calgary.

The objectives of the recent print workshop held during July 1969 were to provide all those seriously and deeply interested in printmaking, the opportunity to work in close conjunction with, and under the direction of, the leading international printmaker, Andrew Stasik (Director, Pratt Graphic Centre, New York) who was assisted by two professional printers, Robert Bigelow and Mahen Patel. Both workshops were extremely well-equipped, and afforded those with a desire to learn extremely professional direction, new valid techniques and processes and helped to iron out any problems. The hope was that a high standard of excellence through creative productive work, seminars, exhibitions, etc. would instill a

greater depth and direction for professional printmaking. Since enrollment was limited to 30 for both workshops, it meant that those who attended would benefit from the small group and would thus be able to get quite a bit of personal attention.

Workshops of this kind are unique in both Canada and the U.S. There are never any "professional" workshops held for a period as short as three weeks. Full credit for organizing and seeing it realized belongs to Helmut Becker, the assistant professor of Fine Arts and Fine Art Education, at the University of Calgary. He was responsible for the ten day workshop in woodblock printing in 1967 where Toshi Yoshida of Japan was the visiting artist; and in 1968 a three week etching workshop was held with Shane Weare from England. So, I must say, that although the University of Calgary, Dept. of Art and Division of Continuing Education with the assistance of a Canada Council Grant were the sponsors of the workshop, full credit must go to Helmut Becker, who was the energetic force that got it going and kept it going.

Mr. Andrew Stasik is highly regarded throughout the art world for his outstanding prints. He has exhibited both in North America and abroad and has been associated with the Pratt Graphic Centre in New York for several years. Besides being a top printmaker, he is also an excellent teacher and administrator. He did not "hold back" any information, but shared his knowledge with all of us. Slides were shown and discussions evolved. The establishing of a communal workshop in each city was discussed, how to go about establishing

it, how it would function best, i.e., the "business" end of a workshop was also looked into. On the creative side, each of us was given personal instruction and guidance so that we could develop our artistic potential to the fullest . . . i.e., to have something of OUR OWN GOING!

The attitude of Mr. Stasik, that of a "true professional" rubbed off on all of us. There were no excuses for sloppy work, for prints that weren't perfect. We were there to learn the fine points of a professional printmakers.

Robert Bigelow, formerly associated with the Tamarind Lithographic Workshop and Gemini studios in Los Angeles, and now an instructor at the Vancouver School of Art was the professional printer (lithography). He was there to aid artists in printing perfect editions and to solve any technical problems they might have. He also printed editions of the international English artist, Anthony Benjamin, who is now on staff at the University of Calgary. Those who participated in the workshop received an original Anthony Benjamin lithography as a parting gift.

Mahen Patel, from the University of Calgary, was a most willing and enthusiastic help for the artists in the silk screen workshop. He collaborated with each artist and helped them print editions.

What was it like? The participants, including myself, were for the most part from Canada, with the exception of one U.S. artist who had attended the workshops held previously. Classes were officially from 9 to 4, but a typical day was more like 7 a.m. to midnight . . . seven days a week. Most of us had

never worked so hard in our lives for a full three weeks . . . but once we got going it was hard to stop! Enthusiasm ran high . . . for where else could one test everything, explore, ask, do, learn, question, compare, discuss, argue, offer advice, criticize and be criticized by other people with the same interest in fantastic "camaraderie" sprung up, and if there were any rivalries, it was not evident. Each was left to "do his own thing."

However, it wasn't all work and no play . . . somehow, parties and sightseeing excursions were organized and everyone was included. For three weeks most of us slept very little, indeed!

Each artist left behind some finished prints which are for the university's permanent collection. A show of the work produced will be held sometime during the coming year. It is hoped, too, that these prints will be exhibited at other universities from coast to coast.

The University of Calgary has tentatively scheduled another workshop for 1970. Let's hope that it materializes and let's also hope that it will inspire other universities and art schools across Canada to open their doors and invite outstanding printmakers as guests.

No artist can operate in a vacuum or in solitude all the time. This "group" workshop is ideal for developing, for contact, for exchange of ideas. Most important, it is the fact of being able to indulge in the luxury of devoting full time, energy, and concentration to prints for three solid weeks. Since most of those attending hold other jobs to sustain themselves, these three weeks were a real luxury. Printmaking lives!

Following page, top: Lithographic Workshop, "discussion" with Mr. Andrew Stasik, Director of workshop seminar. (he is wearing glasses, white shirt, tie). He was visiting director—he is associated with the Pratt Graphic Centre, New York City, which is known throughout the world to graphic artists. Photo taken by: Duncan Lindsay

Following page, bottom left: Mr. Helmut Becker, assistant professor of fine arts and fine art education at Univ. of Calgary who was man who thought of having a workshop like this. Photo taken by: Duncan Lindsay; bottom right: Robert Bigelow, master printer, (lithography) "rolling up" lithographic plate. Photo taken by Duncan Lindsay.

SHIRLEY RAPHAEL

A Montreal painter and engraver who was sent to the Three week Workshop in lithography and serigraphy held in Calgary, at the University of Calgary in July 69.



