

Art: Telling the Printmaking Story

Brooklyn Museum Puts Up Its 16th Annual

By JOHN CANADAY

SINCE its inception in 1947, the Brooklyn Museum's National Print Exhibition has become the most important show in the field, with the best of traditional printmaking serving as a sounding board for the most promising experiments. Just how effective this policy has been is demonstrated in the 16th version of the show, which opened at the museum Tuesday.

Una E. Johnson, curator of prints and drawings, has made the exhibition exploratory, as usual, and retrospective, which is a change. Of the 124 artists represented, 44 are debutants, and a lively bunch they are. But the show's special interest centers on the 80 others, each represented by a print from an earlier show paired with a new one. Frequently the early print is from the first 1947 exhibition.

Without any question there has been more interest and more change in printmaking during the last 20 years than at any time since the popularization of lithography about 150 years ago. (Exactly 150 years ago if we take 1818, the year Aloys Sene-

felder published his book describing the technique he had invented about 1796, as a marker.) The Brooklyn print shows, which have been Miss Johnson's ball game from the beginning, have seen print techniques sprout in dozens of directions. Originally first cousins to drawings, many prints are now half-brothers to paintings and can even take on kinship to low-relief sculpture.

The current exhibition makes no effort to organize the history of this expansion, but the story is there for piecing together. A single early-and-late combination often tells a lot in two words. The most dramatic contrast may be between Roy Lichtenstein's woodcut "To Battle," which was in the 1951 show, and an untitled lithograph done last year in his familiar pop manner.

In spite of its title, "To Battle" is a jolly little print. But it is not at all an experimental one. Its high spirits alone connect it with the late example, in which Mr. Lichtenstein, as always, appears to be having a great time.

Not all the repeaters, however, identify growth with experiment. Isabel Bishop's recent aquatint, "Little Nude," is a solid, quiet print in which the rich manipulation of the medium is held in service to the building of

Exhibition Pairs Artists' Old and New Works

soberly balanced forms. Compared with "Girls Out Doors," an etching from the 1956 exhibition and a typical example of Miss Bishop's affectionate observation of young city people, "Little Nude" gives evidence of how thoughtfully this artist has developed from genre to classical statement.

Instead of offering prizes, the Brooklyn Museum buys prints. The purchase awards this year went to Bernard Childs, Sister Mary Corita, Chaim Koppelman, Boris Margo, Peter Milton, Malcolm Myers, Robert Andrew Parker and Ernest Trova.

A special fund from International Graphic Arts Society was used for the purchase of lithographs by Lee Bontecou, Robert Rauschenberg and Larry Rivers, and an etching by Ronald Markman. Further funds from the Bristol Myers Company for the purchase of outstanding prints in any media went to works by Patricia Benson, Allan d'Arcangelo, Perle Fine, Sam Francis, Antonio Frasconi, Robert Hill, Paul Jenkins, Misch Kohn, George Miyasaki, Gabor Peterdi, Doris Seidler, Jack Sonenberg, Romas Viesulas and John von Wicht.

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