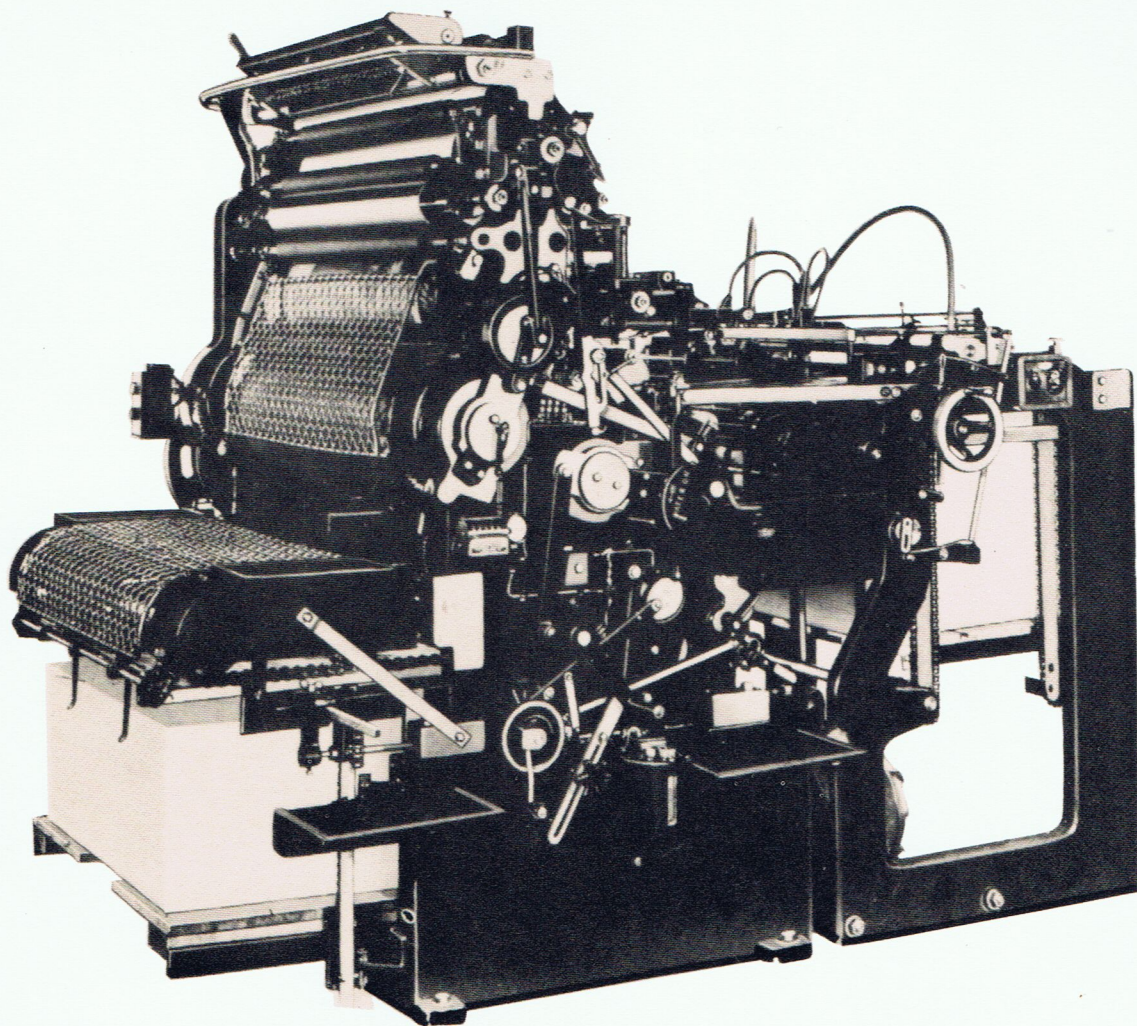




THE DRUM LITHOGRAPHS: 1960-1963

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Exhibition Curated by Stanley I Grand
Catalogue Essay by Clinton Adams
Foreword by Jules Sherman

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FORWARD

Jules Sherman

I remember it as a dark, winter evening in late December 1959 or early January 1960—I can't say exactly—when Reginald Pollack entered my shop, and my life. Reginald, recently returned from Paris, had telephoned a few hours earlier to propose establishing an experimental lithographic print program.

An Atelier! In a commercial litho plant!

I phoned my wife, canceled dinner and awaited his arrival with no doubt that a personal dream was about to be fulfilled. Several hours later, a lifelong friendship had begun and Collectors Graphics was born.

We began work almost immediately, devoting weekends to experimenting with zinc and aluminum plates, coatings and etches, and other contemporary lithographic techniques and materials. Nothing worked. Finally we custom ordered special press-size paper plates. Designed exclusively for short runs on small Multilith equipment, the paper plates were unstable, fragile, and temperamental; but they functioned magnificently — beyond our wildest expectations. With the basic production problem now resolved, the print program began in earnest.

We agreed, at the very beginning, that no restrictions would ever be imposed on the artists or their work; that all costs would be absorbed by the shop so that the artists would not be inhibited by financial considerations; that our aim in printing was solely educational and joyous and that the ultimate product would reflect this philosophy.

Collectors Graphics was to be a self-sustaining love affair!

Jacques Lipchitz, Master, friend of Modigliani, Picasso and their contemporaries, realized the freedom of Collectors Graphics and brought forth its soul. We had scheduled an evening's production; everything was in order when the phone rang. Sick at home with the flu and deeply apologetic about his inability to be present at the printing, Jacques was nonetheless reluctant to break the schedule. I was at press side and asked him if he would permit me to be his eyes: I would describe what I saw and he would respond, through me, to the waiting pressman. He agreed!

Later that evening, I delivered the prints to his home. This gentle giant of a man was overwhelmed. He left his bed, hugged me and said in his endearing French accent, "Jules, you have given me new hope for a life in art!"

With undying love for Reginald, who taught me to See.

With undying love for Merrill, his identical twin, who taught me to Share.

With undying love for Lou, their brother, who taught me to Feel.

THE DRUM LITHOGRAPHS: 1960-1963

Clinton Adams

As has often been the case in the history of artists' lithography, a fortuitous meeting between an artist and a printer made possible the fine prints produced at Drum Lithographers between 1960 and 1963. The artist was Reginald Pollack, who had been making lithographs in New York and Paris since 1941; the printer was Jules Sherman, who offered to print Pollack's hand-drawn offset lithographs "for the sheer joy of it."¹

Pollack had first encountered lithography while an apprentice to Moses Soyer in 1941; soon thereafter, he and some friends had printed lithographs from stone, using presses and equipment at East Side House in Manhattan. In 1948, after military service during World War II, Pollack went to Paris for study, with support from the G.I. Bill. He soon met the French printer Gaston Dorfinant, who permitted the young artist (he was then twenty-four) to draw his stones at a work bench once used by Toulouse-Lautrec. While living in Paris, Pollack continued to exhibit in New York, most often at the Peridot Gallery, established by his brother Louis in 1949. To earn money on the side, he began buying prints in Paris—on the quais and at auctions—acting as agent for Louis Pollack, Charles Stern, and the print dealer, Peter Deitsch. In the late 1950s, he made several color lithographs in Paris, including one on commission from William S. Lieberman, then Curator of Prints at the Museum of Modern Art.²

Simultaneously, a new interest in lithography was developing in the United States. In New York, Margaret Lowengrund opened the Contemporaries Graphic Art Centre (predecessor to the Pratt Graphic Art Center) in 1955, and Tatyana Grosman began her collaboration with Larry Rivers and Frank O'Hara in 1957. In Los Angeles, June Wayne, with a grant from the Ford Foundation, established Tamarind Lithography Workshop in 1960.³ Each of these workshops had its own character and objectives. At Tamarind, a primary goal was the training of a new generation of master printers who, in concert with "artists of diverse styles . . . [might] restore the prestige of lithography by actually creating a collection of extraordinary prints."⁴

Reginald Pollack, however, had come to believe that collaborative lithographic workshops were caught up in a "quagmire of lithographic technology" that caused art to lose its spontaneity. "It was the technology that was of interest, rather than the work of art."⁵ This conclusion (which would be contradicted by history) caused Pollack to seek simpler ways to make prints. Soon after returning from Paris to New York, he began work with the printer Martin Levitt, who introduced him to the Multilith process, a form of

offset lithography that makes use of plastic-impregnated, paper-base plates.

Pollack worked with Levitt to create a suite of small black-and-white and color lithographs, "Interiors and Exteriors," later boxed and distributed by the Peridot Gallery. Meanwhile, over lunches in New York, Pollack had conversations with Tom Hess, editor of *ArtNews* magazine; Walter Bareiss, a noted collector; and journalist Kermit Lansner about the possible ways to stimulate use of lithography by other New York artists. Had it come to fruition, the project they discussed—"Editions New York"—would have involved collaboration between artists and poets (and was thus parallel in intention to the portfolio *21 Etchings and Poems*, a historic publishing project begun in 1951 and completed in 1960).⁶

Precisely because of its lack of technical complexity, Pollack saw the Multilith process as an ideal means for such collaborations. In Multilith printing there are few technical barriers: what the artist draws or the poet writes appears just as drawn or written, without reversal of the image.⁷ "We were tilling the ground," Pollack remembers, "but nothing came of our conversations. The interest was there, the spirit was there, but the mechanism was not."⁸

It was then that Pollack met Jules Sherman, a printer whose commercial business, Drum Lithographers, was located on East Twentieth Street in Manhattan.⁹ As Pollack had not been satisfied with the small size of the plates on which he and Levitt had worked, he was delighted to discover that Sherman was able (by special order) to secure larger ones:

[Sherman] was interested in my research to create prints, and offered his friendship and his presses. In the course of that year, using the larger paper plates, I created a suite of prints with the poet John Hollander. They were done in my studio; John would write on the plates, the poetry, and I did drawings and washes. The suite was entitled "A Beach Vision" and was never put on the market.¹⁰

For Jules Sherman, the collaboration with Pollack—and soon with other artists—provided a welcome break from business: "My shop, commercial during the week, was transformed into a joyous atelier on weekends, where the magic of creating prints transcended commercialism."¹¹ They began work early, usually at six o'clock in the morning. "At the end of each day's work," Pollack remembers, "we were all hot, dirty, and fired with the sense of doing something important." Because few of the artists visited the pressroom ("only those who were most curious about the process"),¹² there was little direct interaction between the artists and the printer.¹³ "We provided the artists with instructions about the plates and about the transparent inks used in lithography, but

nothing was proofed; the plate went on the press, and that was it."¹⁴ Whether in black and white or in colors, the plates were printed as drawn, without change or corrections.

As a means to distribute the lithographs, Sherman and the Pollack brothers decided to form a new corporation, Collectors Graphics, Inc., and to invite a number of artists—including some who were represented by Peridot Gallery—to make lithographs. They hired artist Joel Goldblatt to serve as a liaison: "He would visit artists' studios and go over the technical requirements with them, then, a week or two (or three) afterwards, [he] would collect the plates and deliver them to the press." After printing, Goldblatt would return the completed editions to the artist for signature.

We concentrated on artists who were being pushed aside in the ferment of the abstract expressionist heyday, and the bulk of the art we chose was figurative. . . . Lou persuaded Milton Avery to do a color print; Drum also did a three-color print for Jacques Lipchitz, which was donated to the State of Israel.¹⁵ I contacted and invited Larry Rivers, Marisol, Fairfield Porter, and others to contribute.

More than 100 editions were soon completed, and on 17 April 1961 an initial exhibition was presented at the Peridot Gallery. The announcement stressed the "new technique of lithography" that had been employed in the making of the prints, a point widely echoed in reviews of the exhibition.¹⁶ Writing in *Village Voice*, Suzanne Kiplinger spoke of the "vigor and spontaneity" of the prints:

[They] make one realize with relief that, after all, vigorous drawing hasn't disappeared, it's simply submerged for the moment. As one who enjoys rehearsals, sketches, run-throughs—anything in its nascent, budding state—I recommend this exhibit to others who have grown a little tired of full orchestrations.¹⁷

Clearly, it was this quality of improvisation that most attracted many of the artists who participated in the project:

Highly personalized prints resulted. Fairfield Porter enjoyed the entire concept, an approach that allowed maximum spontaneity and a freedom comparable to drawing in his own sketchbooks. He liked the loose, fingerprinted, almost haphazard look of the finished lithograph. The direct quality of the medium, the paper plates, made it possible for him to select the best drawings.¹⁸

In November 1962, a number of editions were purchased by Vincent Price as an agent for Sears, which advertised them for sale as "Collector's Contemporary Graphics at Attractive Prices." Price, an astute and informed collector, wrote in a foreword: "Art is meant for everyone, and now can be bought at Sears by everyone. I have personally selected every item offered. . . ."19 Jules Sherman estimates that roughly half of the lithographs produced at Drum Lithographers were sold either to Sears or other volume purchasers.²⁰

A second exhibition of the prints published by Collectors Graphics was held at Peridot in December 1963. It included works by twenty-six artists who, the gallery announced, "were selected on the basis of their drawing ability. . . . The styles and subjects range from Reginald Pollack's humorous and metaphorical renderings of puppeteers, to Milton Avery's broadly blocked landscape."²¹ The reviewer for the *Herald Tribune* thought the prints "more spontaneous and free than more difficult lithography on stone. Large color prints by Freilicher, Hillsmith, Frasconi and Cicero have the lively quality of watercolors."²² Writing in *ArtNews*, Valerie Petersen praised Frasconi, who "lets himself forget his stringent sense of design and opens up unlabored forms, crowded and turbulent."²³

The 1963 exhibition proved to be the project's swan song. Reginald Pollack had moved to Los Angeles during 1963, and in his absence, Sherman says, "the energy collapsed. When Reggie said, I'm leaving, I said, okay, that's it. It had been great fun—a love-making project with no commercial implications—but it was over and done with."²⁴ By 1965, Louis Pollack's health was deteriorating, and in December of that year, he consigned the remaining lithographs to the F.A.R. Gallery, where they would be sold as the "Collectors Graphics Collection";²⁵ later, he sold Peridot to Joan Washburn.²⁶

In the past thirty years the lithographs included in this exhibition have been little known and little seen, eclipsed by the larger, more complex lithographs that came from the presses at Tamarind, U.L.A.E., and other workshops across the country. Today, however, as we look at them anew, we are struck by their immediacy: by the "exemplary lyric economy" of Mary Frank's linear drawings;²⁷ the lively expressionism of Jane Freilicher's landscapes; the force of Robert Goodnough's tangled time-and-motion studies; the power of James Brooks's brush drawing; the "extraordinary facility" of David Levine's *Animal Kingdom*;²⁸ and by many other accomplished and fresh statements. Taken together, there can be no question but that these vibrant lithographs constitute an important (and too long neglected) chapter in the history of American lithography.

NOTES

1. Sherman to Adams, 17 June 1994. I express my gratitude to Jules Sherman and Reginald Pollack for their generous (and indispensable) assistance in the writing of this essay.
2. Lieberman had multiple interests in the field. As a director of the Print Council of America, he was closely associated with Theodore J. H. Gusten, its executive secretary. Gusten was simultaneously Director of the International Graphic Art Society (IGAS), which commissioned and distributed editions of prints by American and European artists, and a member of the Pratt Graphic Art Center's advisory board. Also a member of that board, Lieberman sought Ford Foundation support (through diversion of funds from Tamarind to Pratt) for a program to bring French master printers to New York.
3. See Clinton Adams, *American Lithographers, 1900-1960: The Artists and Their Printers* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), pp. 182-206.
4. June Wayne, "To Restore the Art of the Lithograph in the United States," a proposal submitted to the Program in Humanities and the Arts of the Ford Foundation, 1959.
5. Pollack, in a telephone interview with Joan Ludman, 8 August 1979. I thank Joan Ludman for providing a transcript of this interview.
6. See Lanier Graham, "The Rise of the *Livre d'Artiste* in America: Reflections on 21 *Etchings and Poems* and the Early 1960s," *Tamarind Papers* 13 (1990): 35-40.
7. As in all offset printing, the image is twice reversed: once upon transfer to an intermediary "blanket," and again upon transfer to the paper. It thus appears on the paper as the artist draws it on the plate, without the mirror-image reversal encountered in other forms of printmaking.
8. Pollack, in telephone conversation with Adams, 23 July 1994.
9. James Thompson has mistakenly written that the Drum lithographs were printed by "a commercial printer in New York City [Sherman] who invited artists to visit his home on Long Island in the early 1960s and use the lithographic facilities he had there" (Thompson, in the exhibition catalogue, *Undereposed* [Cullowhee, N.C.: Department of Art, Western Carolina University, 1992], p. 1).
Sherman confirms that all of the lithographs were printed at Drum Lithographers in Manhattan and that his work with Pollack began early in 1960. Each lithograph was assigned a Collectors Graphics number, beginning with seven prints by Carmen Cicero, four of which are dated 1960.
10. Pollack to Adams, 4 June 1994. Except as otherwise noted, all quotations are from this letter.
11. Sherman to Adams, 17 June 1994.
12. Pollack, in telephone conversation with Adams, 23 July 1994.
13. Sherman and Pollack remember that Harvey Dinnerstein, David Levine, Jacques Lipchitz, Paul Resika, and Alvin Ross were among those who came to the pressroom.
14. Sherman, in telephone conversation with Adams, 26 July 1994.

15. Lipchitz made a total of three lithographs at Drum.
16. In fact, American artists had made original, hand-drawn, offset lithographs since the 1930s. Jean Charlot's *Picture Book* (1933) was printed by Will and Lynton Kistler in Los Angeles; the following year, while teaching at the Florence Cane School in New York, Charlot acquired a Multilith press and, together with Albert Carman and Emilio Amero made a number of Multilith prints (1934-35); the historic portfolio published by American Abstract Artists (1937) was printed on the Cane School press. Carman subsequently printed many color offset prints for "The Artists Color Proof Associates" (ca. 1936-41) and for Marc Chagall's *The Tales from the Arabian Nights* (1945). In San Francisco, Richard Diebenkorn (and others) made lithographs for the portfolio *Drawings* (1948), printed by Multilith. See Adams, *American Lithographers* (cited n. 3), and Janet Flint, *Art for All: American Print Publishing Between the Wars* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1980).
17. *Village Voice*, 27 April 1961.
18. Joan Ludman, *Fairfield Porter: A Catalogue Raisonné of His Prints, Including Illustrations, Bookjackets, and Exhibition Posters* (Scarsdale, N.Y.: Highland House, 1981), p. 16.
19. Price wrote: "We're really tremendously thrilled at having these [lithographs] to add to the collection and I just wanted you to know how really wonderful you were about everything" (Price to Louis and Reginald Pollack, 9 November 1962).
20. According to Sherman, the Rock-Hill-Uris Group, a hotel chain, purchased "several thousand prints" on 12 October 1961. Sears made payment of \$53,531.50 for 3,540 impressions on 19 November 1962. Editions purchased by Sears included Carmen Cicero, *Abstraction*; Robert Goodnough, *The Chief*; David Levine, *Coney Island*; Reginald Pollack, *Old Man at Table*, *Mario as Arab*, *Still Life with Garlic*, and *Actor, 3/4 View*; Paul Resika, *Seated Girl*; and Larry Rivers, *Webster* (sales catalogue published by Sears, 1964).
21. Transcript of announcement on WNEW-TV, 30 December 1963.
22. Unsigned review, *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 December 1963.
23. "Collector's [sic] Graphics, Inc.," *ArtNews* 62 (December 1963): 55.
24. Sherman sold Drum Lithographers in 1970.
25. Letter of agreement between Collectors Graphics, Inc., and F.A.R. Gallery, Inc., 28 December 1965. I thank Joan T. Washburn and Jay Grimm for making available this letter and other materials contained in the Peridot Gallery scrapbooks.
26. Louis Pollack (b. 1921) died in 1970.
27. Hilton Kramer, quoted in *Underexposed* (cited n. 9), p. 5.
28. *Underexposed*, p. 11.



REGINALD POLLACK, *Landscape with Clouds*, lithograph, 9 7/8 x 12 3/4.