

*(Almost) Every Year: Sixty Years of Printmaking at Gemini G.E.L.*

Curated by Susan Dackerman and Helen Molesworth

*(Almost) Every Year: Sixty Years of Printmaking at Gemini G.E.L.* highlights the extraordinary range of prints created at Gemini's Los Angeles workshop from 1966 through the present day. Rather than focusing monographically on the lives and "greatest hits" of the many celebrated artists who worked at Gemini, curators Susan Dackerman and Helen Molesworth have chosen to feature selections from the publisher's remarkable output from (almost) each of its sixty years, creating a presentation of the work within the framework of changing cultural contexts, artistic strategies, and individual styles.

Displaying the work chronologically also highlights the greatest strengths of the Gemini workshop – friendship, collaboration, and continuity. Gemini provided not only the inspirational cauldron of the city of Los Angeles, it also offered the stimulation and collegiality of peers. By showing artists' work in proximity to the prints of their fellow artists working around the same time, the artists' mutual admiration and influence become apparent. For instance, in the late 1960s when Robert Rauschenberg was famous for introducing found imagery into lithographs such as *Sky Garden*, Jasper Johns was more inclined to draw directly on the lithographic stones. Yet, his *Figure 7* includes a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa*, suggesting that Gemini's artists were not only following the artistic strategies of the time, but also following each other's work. David Hockney also was well aware of the trend and slyly incorporated his own "found" images – drawn reproductions of his own prints – in his 1973 lithograph, *Wind*.

Affiliations and reciprocal influence among Gemini artists become apparent through the installation of rich and resonant groupings of printed works and multiples by decade. The space devoted to works from the 1970s demonstrates how such artists as Johns, Ed Ruscha, and Ed Kienholz elevated everyday objects like a light bulb, piece of cheese, and oil can to the subject matter of art. Robert Gober's lithographic depiction of shoes dating from 2000 demonstrates the continuation of the practice. The exhibition highlights the endurance of the most important ideas in contemporary art, as well as their revision in the new century.

The same can be seen in works from the 1980s and 90s by Dan Flavin, Elizabeth Murray, and Richard Serra that display the artists' commitment to the investigation and exploitation of color – from the brightest reds to the darkest blacks – in both figurative and abstract work. Such experimentation with hue, shade, and contrast commenced at Gemini's inception, with Josef Albers' iconic series, *White Line Squares* and Ellsworth Kelly's colorful clashing forms, and has continued into the twenty-first century with Tacita Dean's *Pantone Pairs*.

It's worth noting that Gemini, consciously or not, has responded to feminist artistic goals over its lifetime. Although its first decade of production was dominated by male artists, as was typical of the time, by the 1980s Dorothea Rockburne, Vija Celmins, and Susan Rothenberg were among the many notable artists making prints in the studio. By the 1990s, the gender distribution among artists was more even, and today, Gemini's roster features some of the most important women artists of the day, a testament to Gemini's current owners' – Suzanne Felsen, Ayn Grinstein, Ellen Grinstein, and Joni Moisant Weyl – awareness of equality of the sexes within artistic production.

The exhibition's title includes the qualifier, "*Almost*," because representing every single year by an evocative artwork would require far more gallery space than most galleries – or even museums – have. While at least one work by most of the artists associated with Gemini is presented, it is a mere fraction of what Gemini artists have created there overall. For a more comprehensive selection of the publisher's prints and multiples, see the National Gallery of Art's Gemini G.E.L. archive: <https://www.geminigel.com/page/national-gallery/> and the artist page of Gemini's website: <https://www.geminigel.com/artists/>. Both are records of Gemini's consistently astonishing production of the "greatest hits" of American printmaking.