

Printed in Omaha:
A Retrospective Exhibition of the UNO Print Workshop

February 29-April 5, 2008

UNO Art Gallery
College of Communication, Fine Arts, and Media
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Any project that lasts for thirty years and involves this number of events becomes a story of the relationships that are formed through the process. The workshop could not have survived without the continual support of numerous people. It would be impossible to thank everyone by name. We do thank the many who have lent a hand or provided some type of support at critical moments throughout the years. The original subscribers who bought prints to support the program and those who still purchase prints that provide the means to continue. There are those who have provide financial resources which keep the workshop solvent. There are many members of the community who have provided a meal or other favor for a visiting artist. The Friends of Art provides continual sponsorship of events. Our community partners like the Joslyn Art Museum, the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, el Museo Latino, Metropolitan Community College, and Gallery 72 have provided beneficial relationships. The Nebraska Arts Council and The National Endowment for the Arts have been crucial to the program at different stages. Our colleagues in the Department of Art and Art History and the University of Nebraska at Omaha have always been there for us. The artists and printers who participated in the program. The many student assistants who have worked with the artists and printers in the proofing and printing of editions have been essential to the process. On behalf of Tom Majeski and the UNO Print Workshop, thank you all for your continuous support through the years.

Gary Day
Director, UNO Print Workshop

I would like to thank those persons who participated in making this exhibition possible. Emeritus Dean Robert Welk, Acting Dean Gail Baker, and Professors Mary Caroline Simpson, David Helm, and Gary Day all have committed many hours to the project. A very special thanks to H. Don and Connie Osbourne for their support for the preparation of the prints. Thanks also to student workers Shayla Alerie, Frances Osugi, Stephanie Thompson Plummer, Kara Wentworth, along with others, who assisted in the research and installation of the exhibition. For all the others who contributed their time and energy, it is greatly appreciated.

Colleen Heavican
UNO Art Gallery Director

Omaha's Contributions to Contemporary Art and Culture

If one were to ask people in the art world to list American cities, other than the obvious ones, which have been significant centers for the production of contemporary art and architecture over the last few decades, it is unlikely that Omaha would make the list. Yet, for over thirty years, major artists and, more recently, architects have made work in Omaha, which has had an impact far beyond the city, the region and the state. The efforts of many individuals and the institutions with which they were associated have transformed the cultural landscape of Omaha and made substantive contributions to contemporary art and culture. Among the most important of these individuals and institutions were: Holliday T. Day, who organized the I-80 Series of exhibitions of contemporary artists at the Joslyn Art Museum in the early 1980's, Ree Schonlau, who established the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in 1981, major architects, including Malcolm Holzman of Hardy, Holzman, Pfeiffer, Sir Norman Foster of Foster and Associates, and James Ingo Fried, of Pei, Cobb and Fried who have designed buildings in Omaha over the last fifteen years, major figures in public art, including Andrew Leicester, Athena Tacha, Alice Aycock, Eric Orr and others, who have been commissioned to produce major pieces of public art, and of course, the many contemporary artists, collectors and other art professionals who make Omaha their home. The result has been to create what might be called a "culture of creativity," in what some might see as, this unlikely site - a mid-sized midwestern city far from major artistic centers.

One might argue quite persuasively, however, that the individual who inaugurated this focus on contemporary art in Omaha was Thomas Majeski, who as Professor of Printmaking at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, conceived and fostered the creation of the UNO Print Workshop. The workshop, established in 1976 with a small grant from the NEA and still thriving today, has brought dozens of leading artists from around the country to UNO to create and edition a print. A portion of each edition is then sold to help fund the continuing operation of the workshop. The UNO Print Workshop, one of the oldest continuously operating workshops of its kind in the country, has been distinguished, not only by its longevity, but by the significance of the artists participating and the quality of the work they have produced. These prints have become much sought after by knowledgeable collectors, museums and other institutions and represent an important sampling of the creative dimensions of the printmaker's art over the last three decades. The current exhibition will introduce a broader public to an artistic tradition of excellence, based in Omaha, which has now lasted for more than thirty years.

-- Dr. Martin Rosenberg

Professor of Art History and Chair
Department of Fine Arts
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

The Permanent Collection of the UNO Print Workshop Visiting Artist Program, 1976-2006

Mary Caroline Simpson



“Art belongs in the university. Good art should have an intellectual background to it, not just a talent. The artist must be intellectual. He should understand man and his problems—the many facets of life. He cannot obtain this knowledge and intellectual stature unless he is exposed to art as studied in the universities,” Thomas Majeski remarked during a 1964 interview with the *Dundee* and *West Omaha Sun*. Graduate studies at the University of Iowa under the highly regarded intaglio specialist and printmaking educator Mauricio Lasansky certainly shaped his views on the role of the arts in higher education and the importance of a college degree for the artist. The printmaking program and workshop facility in Iowa City trained many artist-educators, who established their own programs at colleges and universities across the country. Most perpetuated their teacher’s dedication to a spectrum of intaglio techniques including etching, engraving, mezzotint, dry point, and aquatint.^a

In 1963, Council Bluffs native Thomas Majeski joined the faculty of the University of Omaha where he had earned a B.A. in 1960 and established its printmaking program. Lloyd Menard, who completed a B.F.A. in 1965, was his first student to pursue graduate training in printmaking. After earning his M.F.A. at the University of Illinois in 1972, Menard joined the faculty of the University of South Dakota where he taught printmaking, papermaking, and drawing. In the summer of 1975, he organized a very large and quite memorable group residency workshop funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Faculty and students from several notable university printmaking programs attended the workshop. Afterwards, Majeski discussed the experience with Indiana University Professor Rudy Pozzatti. Both believed that the “students were treated to a concentrated and thoroughly professional exhibit of skills and ability by all participating artists,” which had given “students an idea of the wide diversity and range of possibilities within the various media.” “Lloyd’s project was exceedingly ambitious, and I think you

are wise to scale it down to one person and thus remove the competitive aspect which made the Vermillion situation a little strained at times,” Pozzatti advised Majeski, who wanted to set up a similar residency program at UNO. He also sought advice from printmakers Warrington Colescott and Jack Damer both at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.^b

Between 1965 (the year the NEA was created) and 1977, its budget grew from \$2.5 million to over \$100 million a year; \$3.5 million of which went towards the visual arts. This support included grants awarded directly to an artist, as well as support for artist workshops, alternative exhibition spaces, and short-term artist residency programs at colleges and universities. In January 1976, Majeski applied for NEA funding to establish the Visiting Artist Program of the UNO Print Workshop. He proposed bringing specialists in intaglio, lithography, serigraph, and relief printing to the UNO campus each semester for one to two weeks to print an original edition of thirty impressions using the art department facilities and with the assistance of faculty and art students and in collaboration with an invited master printer, if needed. A letter of support provided by Michael Nushawg, then an Assistant Professor of Printmaking at the University of Nebraska Lincoln, clearly explained the need for such a program. “Professional printmakers have a tendency to be somewhat isolated in various parts of the country and have very little opportunity, except through programs such as this to interact with each other, students and the general public. We tend to “know” each other only by catalogue reproductions and have few opportunities to discuss directions and philosophies.” This isolation was especially true for regional cities like Omaha. The proposed residency program would enrich the city’s art community. More important, interaction with critically acclaimed artists and highly skilled master printmakers would broaden the students’ knowledge thus better preparing them for graduate study and perhaps a career in printmaking or the visual arts.^c



The application was a success. Majeski received \$1,161 from the NEA that, when combined with a required matching grant from UNO, provided \$2,322 to launch the Visiting Artists Program of the UNO Print Workshop, a program of lasting importance to the Department of Art & Art History. Rudy Pozzatti, a prolific artist with an international reputation as a “consummate” master printmaker was the first artist invited to campus. The highly respected educator had local ties. Pozzatti, fresh out of the M.F.A. program at the University of Colorado at Boulder, had taught at the University of Nebraska Lincoln before taking over the printmaking program at Indiana University at Bloomington in 1956. The UNO workshop paid for all supplies and production expenses as well as provided the artist with an honorarium of \$100 a day plus expenses during his residency October 4 through 8, 1976. In exchange, Pozzatti held a critique of student work, as well as discussed the conceptual basis of his work and the lithography processes to students. Along with his assistant, Indiana University M.F.A. candidate Dave Driesbach, five UNO students actively helped print an edition based on an already completed plate. ^d

On Oct. 13, 1976, *The Gateway* ran a feature on Rudy Pozzatti and the workshop, which as Majeski told the reporter was a “unique program for Omaha as well as this campus.” It was a hit with students. “You can go to a gallery and see the artists’ finished work, but seeing it done enhances the work tremendously,” exclaimed undergraduate Greg Mickells and another beginning art student, Terry Wuerfele, said, “As a prospective printmaker, I found it very interesting. Pozzatti is the kind of guy who sways young students towards printmaking because he’s a hell-of-a-craftsman.” Student groups from the Lincoln campus, Creighton University in Omaha, Grandview College in Des Moines, and Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs also observed the editioning process. Over 125 people from the University

and the community attended “Rudy Pozzatti and His Images,” an artist talk capping off his residency and an exhibition of his most recent prints at the UNO Art Gallery. The University administration was also impressed. “You are to be highly commended for bringing to the UNO Campus the concept of the artist in residence and for opening with an artist the stature of Rudy Pozzatti. Experiencing the creation of an art object through to a finished product is a rare treat. Thanks to your drive and creativity you provided the UNO/Omaha Community with a much needed opportunity to gain both insight and appreciation of a first rate artist. I personally enjoyed Rudy Pozzatti and I know of several others who are as equally indebted to you. Congratulations on a first rate achievement,” wrote Dr. William T. Pink, Chairperson of Educational Foundations and Urban Education, to Majeski regarding the successful launch of his new program. ^e

The Visiting Artist Program (VAP) of the UNO Print Workshop is one of the first programs of its type and more significantly, among the few offering under-graduate art students an opportunity to observe a master printmaker or notable artist at work and then work as collaborators in the printing of an edition. Majeski initially selected visiting artists from a pool of highly talented printmakers teaching at major universities in the Midwest and Great Plains regions. Many devised visiting artist programs tied to small university-affiliated presses. These include Normal Editions at Illinois State University started by James Butler in 1976. Butler also used NEA funding to set up a program at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, where he taught from 1973 to 1976. The Echo Press at Indiana University launched by Rudy Pozzatti and master printer David Keister in 1979, and William Weege, whose Jones Road Print Stop and Stable in Madison led to the creation of the University of Wisconsin Tandem Press in 1988, are other notable residency workshops run by universities with graduate printmaking programs. ^f

All of the printmakers invited to campus during the 1970s were highly skilled practitioners of lithography and intaglio as well as dedicated to passing down knowledge through the longstanding tradition of mentorship and apprenticeship that had assumed a new form with the emergence of university based collaborative presses and visiting artists programs. Many of the artists initiating these programs relied on seed money from the NEA while simultaneously remaining critical of the government and expressing anti-establishment, counter cultural convictions through their work. Visiting artists Warrington Colescott, Lloyd Menard, Robert Nelson, and William Walmsley are united by both a ribald and playful irreverence and a belief in free and meaningful artistic expression that defies the efforts by government and society to control this expression.

Photos: Tom Majeski (center) with students John Derry and Dan Devening, 1973; printmaker Jay Bolotin drafting an image; artist Sandy Winters surveying proofs; student printer Hannah Ault Marchio wiping a John Himmelfarb plate.

All measurements and inscriptions are given for the archive impression held in the UNO Print Workshop Visiting Program collection at the UNO Art Gallery. Height precedes width in the measurements, first given in inches and then in centimeters. Only prints published by the UNO Print Workshop as part of its Visiting Artist Program are included in the checklist and featured in this catalog.