

Clare Henry

**Glasgow Print
Studio exhibition
reviews**

1983

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3rd March 1983

John Mackechnie and Robert Paul

THEIR shared invitation card carries two very different images. One is an etching of a speeding black Buick in downtown New York, the other a colourful lithograph of Chinese acrobats. Yet John Mackechnie and Robert Paul have a lot in common, beside a two-man show at Glasgow Print Studio until April 2.

Both were born in 1949 in Glasgow, studied at Glasgow School of Art and went on to make a career in printmaking, Paul as technician at GSA, Mackechnie as workshop manager at GPS. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, both use photography in their printmaking and do it exceedingly well.

Paul's exhibition is a mini retrospective with work from the last 10 years. This emphasises the great strides he has made in that time. The early prints are technically proficient but often anaemic in colour and hesitant in drawing the composition. Pattern, used merely for its own sake, abounds on tiled floor, waistcoat and tabletop. In contrast his recent work is very strong, combining considerable technical virtuosity with powerful images. The multi-colour pictures are often built up from as many as 14 plates, resulting

in vibrant effects for exotic jungle birds or theatre acrobats.

Mackechnie is one of Scotland's best known printmakers and has exhibited all over Europe. The photo etchings on show fall into three categories: the well loved romantic Kibble Palace set; a — to my mind — misguided series of picture postcard lochs and mountains and "America."

The latter are very successful translations of images culled from a trip to the States last year. Brasher in colour and harder of edge, they range from New York skyscrapers to fisherman's wharf San Francisco.

This exhibition rightly comes under the banner of "Scottish contributions to photography," this month's successful theme in Glasgow.

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12th April 1983

Glasgow Print Studio
CLARE HENRY

Malte Sartorius *12/4/83*

MALTE SARTORIUS is professor at the college of Art, Braunschweig in Germany. He is also an etcher of considerable merit, prize winner at prestigious international print biennales and at present exhibitor at Glasgow Print Studio Gallery, courtesy of the Goethe Institute (till May 2).

His art is of the super-realist style still fashionable in some areas and the detail and intensity of seeing in much of his work is impressive. Stroke upon stroke builds up into a highly charged precise record of a landscape or a still life.

The subjects themselves are not important, (these are ordinary scenes, everyday kitchen dishes or garden tools), but objectively observed, considered, scrutinised and absorbed, they are transformed into timeless images.

Occasionally, as with his minutely recorded foregrounds of weeds or wasteground, I feel his efforts could be put into something more interesting and sometimes his etchings taste too strongly of nineteenth century tight cross-hatching technicalities, but other compositions are breathtaking. I especially admired his etched studies of an old bare plaster wall with a jug in a niche, a corner of studio table clutter and, last but not best, a superb drawing, "Granja IV."

8th June 1983

CLARE HENRY

Zimiles/Binnie/Remfry

THE American artist Murray Zimiles shot to fame through his book, now the standard work on lithography, but ironically he started out as a film maker. On a scholarship in Paris he transferred to lithography and now teaches drawing as well as print and papermaking at State University, New York.

His work (at Glasgow Print Studio until June 9) reflects this American policy for boundary crossing ("the only thing we do better than you," he reflected after a whistle-stop tour of Scottish art colleges and print workshops).

It includes mixed media and cast paper work incorporated into drawn self-portraits, often in movement, often nude, of "The Artist and his Wife in the Studio," where the painting on the easel is seen as more real than the surreal surrounding activity. Earlier work hints at darker, more-troubled times where ominous birds of prey threaten.

Zimiles was in Scotland courtesy of an exchange project organised by the Glasgow School of Art, and the Glasgow School of Art was also the springboard for Maureen Binnie's scholarship study at Hayter's famous atelier in Paris.

Glasgow Print Studio

CLARE HENRY

Ben Cabrera

EXHIBITIONS in Manila, Paris, New York, Hong Kong and London show the international breadth of Ben Cabrera's orbit but, ironically, the visual granary for his work — the old maps, prints, photographs and travelogues about the Philippine colonial period — were discovered in

antiquarian bookshops in London.

He has been a full-time artist since 1969, producing paintings and editioning his prints on his studio press. These etchings are now at Glasgow Print Studio Gallery until July 8.

Almost all the images contain people: sometimes they are nostalgic and in period dress like the "Two Mestizas" (1977) where elegant ladies pose, fan or parasol in hand, or the "Filipina Domestica Help" in her white, starched apron, collar and cuffs.

Later prints show his contemporaries, his fellow expatriates in London bedsits or Paris studios. All concern themselves with drapery and this interest sometimes takes over the image. "Coconut Man" for instance is more about his Philippine costume than about him.

Other images are eye-catching through their composition. Cabrera uses "cropping" and "boxing" to define or contain people in a room or street setting, like "Nena in her Paris Studio." Alternatively he presents imaginary still life groups of strange tiny modelled figures and huge vegetables and fruit.

"There are two options open to the Filipino living abroad. One is that his Filipino-ness becomes evident and the other is he gets eaten up by the dominant culture." Cabrera has tried to achieve a balance but despite a technical sophistication is unable to shake off a preoccupation with his homeland. Perhaps this is his silver lining.

Members' Summer Show

I HAD anticipated that I would be well acquainted with all the printmakers — even the prints — in the Glasgow Print Studio's Members' Summer Show. Happily I was mistaken! This

Of course not all the newcomers are first time stars. Beginners luck does not pertain in printmaking and some efforts are all too obviously tentative. However, David Gibson's collage-style print and Jim Duncan's couple of design-conscious views avoid this trap.

A new departure is the inclusion of photographs, such as Roger Farnham's powerful cibachrome "Greenock Dockside and Cranes" or Alan Paterson's "Athlone." With the demise of Compass Four Gallery and the delay in re-opening Edinburgh's Stills Gallery there is really nowhere in Scotland, never mind Glasgow, exhibiting photographs. Perhaps the GPS could expand this side of things to advantage.

Another innovation is textile printing. Judith McLean is one of the practitioners and she shows her "Fishing Nets" fabric in different colourways as well as made-up into a skirt and suntop.

But back to the well-known professionals. Michael Roshclau has two tip-top hot-off-the-press lithographs. As always they combine immaculate technique with bold, witty designs. Robert Paul also continues to entertain with his 1930s pastiche of childhood sentimentality. John Mackechnie's American Chevrolet and mural has been seen in London as has Jack Millar's pink and gold sunset Cadillac.

Others to note are Lennox Paterson, Brian Kelly (a successful expressionist head), Stuart Duffin, Sue Mackechnie ("Red Table" is her best so far), and Gillian Kidd whose lino-cut of feet in a peach bubble bath is very jolly.

21st September 1983

ARTS/REVIEW

Print Studio

CLARE HENRY

Ian Fleming

21/9/83

"I MAKE no bones about it. I'm a realist." It was Ian Fleming speaking. And Ian Fleming artist, can, even in his mid-seventies, make James Bond look rather a slouch! His print retrospective at the Glasgow Print Studio till October 14 contains almost 200 works from 1925 to 1983 and takes no account of his many paintings or the fact that Fleming spent 40 years in art education, the last 18 as head of Aberdeen Art School.

The exhibition is impressive. Fleming has the ability to involve the spectator in his vision — be it a fine line etching of Glasgow in the Blitz, a social comment on violence, or a colourful silkscreen of seagulls in the sun.

His strength as a draughtsman must have made graphic work an obvious favourite. At school in Hyndland he soon discovered he could draw better than anybody else. Glasgow Art School introduced him to colour woodcuts (some remarkable ones from 1925 are on show); later came etching and line engraving.

Top of the pops are bound to be the evocative images of Glasgow in the 1930s and '40s; the Botanic Gardens; the canal at Anniesland, air raid in Maryhill. But equally noteworthy are the two big series "Creation" and "Comment."

GPH

LA TAVERNA Restaurant. Three-course business lunch. £2.65 inclusive. 7A

THE BASEMENT Restaurant at Archie's. Fixed price evening menu. £6.25. 27 Waterloo Street. 041 221

23rd November 1983

Glasgow Print Studio

CLARE HENRY

23/11/83

Christopher Pratt

IT is par for the course when a catalogue introduction is full of hyperbole, but it is quite another thing when claims of moral, spiritual and mystic inner significance are made for what are, at the end of the day, straightforward everyday scenes. "Moreover these pictures perform the emblematic function of an icon." I quote from the doubtful catalogue blurb on Christopher Pratt whose show of screenprints is at the Glasgow Print Studio Gallery till December 8.

Pratt is a Canadian, recognised as one of that country's leading contemporary artists. A larger show of oil paintings and prints of the bleak Newfoundland coastline was seen in London, Brussels, Paris and Dublin earlier this year but Glasgow has prints alone dating from 1968 on.

These prints are technically superb, precision personified, but horribly tedious. He observes, depicts literally with relentless rigidity — every pebble, every angular triangular wave — but leaves no room for imperfection, feeling, life. On occasions this firm control can work. I enjoyed his dark lighthouse and his bleached ship-board houses where static geometry has a formal presence. However, the overall impression of a roomful of hard-edge discipline in the wispy washy shades of cream and mustard is less than exciting.

19th December 1983

...ta O'Neil or
...se snappy dance
...rom wishfully thinking
... all be encapsulated on a
... LPs without losing anything —
...ion reinforced by the unimaginative
...costumes and, yet again, that boring
...basic H-frame set which has dominated
...every production this season.

19/12/1983

Glasgow Print Studio CLARE HENRY

Members' Exhibition

TWO auctions in Glasgow and Edinburgh last week proved the popularity of contemporary original prints. Glasgow Print Studio (raising money for a new etching press) and Edinburgh Print-makers (needing cash for their move to new premises in the Old Washhouse in Union Street) made almost £5000 between them.

But if you missed the sales, you can still get a bargain at Glasgow's Members Show (till January 7) or Edinburgh's Scottish Print Open (till Friday).

Glasgow has a gem of a John Taylor for £18, or a clever Robert Paul "Rainbow Fade Cyclist" for £17.50. Admittedly Edinburgh's prices are higher but then the Scottish Print Open is a prestigious exhibition with one work each from 48 selected artists. Glasgow, on the other hand, shows only local members. Two sides to the same printmaking coin which should work equally well — but don't.

Glasgow's exhibition, although containing good things, lacks body. This is partly due to the fact that some of Glasgow's high-powered members, for one reason or another, have not exhibited. Administration and teaching sucks many dry and they should guard against it.

However, others are in fine form like Michael Roschlau (three clever trompe l'oeil pictures); a fine ship worker and crane by Dominic Snyder (would he had more prints here); Simon Burder (painterly well composed lithographs of a potter by a window or "The Bread Oven"; Bet Low (forest landscape) and David Reed (American cars).

Photographs also figure here, with interesting images from Alan Paterson and Roger Farnham.
