

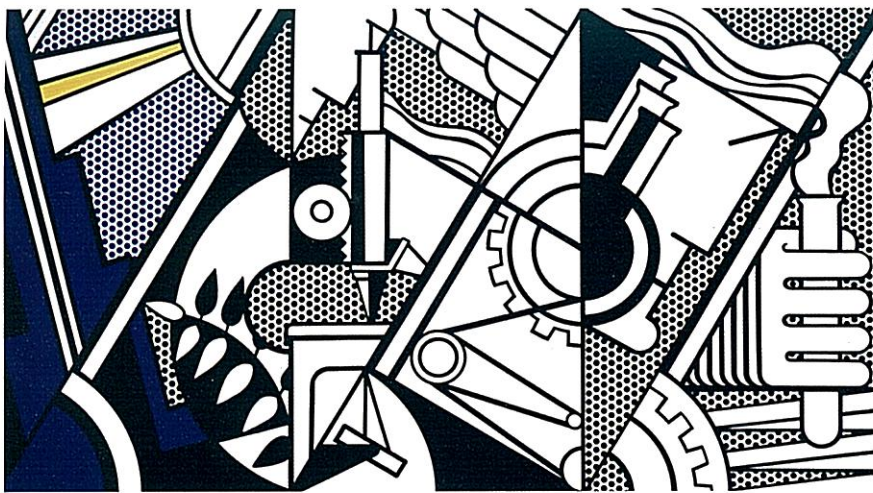
# Working with Prints

Selections from Eight Corporate Collections



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INTERNATIONAL PRINT CENTER NEW YORK



Roy Lichtenstein, *Peace Through Chemistry IV*, 1970, lithograph, edition of 56, 30 x 50 inches. Collection of the Hess Corporation. Image © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein/Gemini G.E.L.

The fine art print is a staple of corporate art collections in the United States. The richness and variety of artistic expression in contemporary prints enliven the office environment for millions of Americans who work in corporate settings. The multiplicity and mobility of prints have allowed the corporation to become an important venue for exhibiting the art of our time. Prints provide an opportunity for a corporation to acquire works by artists it could perhaps not afford in other mediums.

*Working with Prints: Selections from Eight Corporate Collections* shows the quality of fine art prints in corporate collections today and demonstrates diverse approaches that companies take when collecting fine art. The collections included in this exhibition represent a cross-section of businesses from banking and insurance, to law, energy and health care. *Working with Prints* features art from companies across the country whose collections are recognized milestones in the history of U.S. corporate collecting or have a unique focus and/or purpose. It is the first in a series of IPCNY exhibitions of prints drawn from corporate collections.



1913 by the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad

As an example of an early acquisition of a fine art print by a corporation, the exhibition begins with Thomas Moran's lithograph *Grand Canyon of Arizona - from Hermit Rim Road* published in

Company. Having acquired Moran's 1892 painting of the same subject, the directors of the railway commissioned this lithograph for advertising purposes; the prints were distributed in stations, hotels, and offices across the country in order to lure customers to what the public then considered violent territory.

Through the second quarter of the twentieth century, the printed image continued to be used extensively in advertising campaigns by firms such as Steinway and Sons, Dole Pineapple Company, Citibank, Upjohn Pharmaceuticals and DeBeers Diamonds with artists creating images related to each company's product. The Container Corporation took this a step further with their innovative advertising campaign, commissioning artists to create images that conveyed good design aesthetics; this campaign became the *Great Ideas of Western Man Series*. It wasn't until 1937, however, that art was collected for art's sake with IBM's purchase of paintings from the 79 countries where it did business, and later from all 48 U.S. states and territories; presentations of this collection were organized for the 1939 World's Fair and other venues.

In the 1940's, in the spirit of the WPA, a number of companies, including Encyclopedia Britannica, Abbott Laboratories and Standard Oil of New Jersey, acquired American art for patriotic reasons. Postwar, companies such as Pepsi Cola and Hallmark raised public awareness of U.S. artists through national juried competitions. By the late twentieth century, many American corporations had assembled extensive art collections to the great benefit of their employees, clients and communities.



**P**ryor Cashman LLP, a Manhattan law firm, chose to focus its resources on a particular medium: contemporary woodblock printing. All of the prints in this collection are based on the block-printing technique, sometimes combined with other mediums. Acquisitions are made by a professionally-advised committee of the firm's partners, with a goal of mixing

established artists with those less known, and also with a balance of representational and abstract works. The collection was started in 1990 and is installed throughout the firm in public halls and conference rooms. Diverse artistic styles are represented within the woodblock context, from Elizabeth Murray's organic forms in *Dotty* of 1999, to Robert Mangold's minimal, grainy abstract shape in *Untitled*, 1991. Robert Kushner delights with *Hangzou Tulip*, a woodblock print on silk *chine collé* printed in China in 1989.

**T**oday, companies continue to collect art for a variety of reasons ranging from stimulating the environment for their employees and visitors, to enhancing their corporate images, to targeting specific audiences by circulating exhibitions from their collections. The outpouring of artistic expression in fine art prints from the second half of the twentieth century through today continues to find a ready audience in the corporations of America. Easily accessible by virtue of imagery, price, size and mobility, prints in corporate collections have helped disseminate artists' ideas to a broader segment of society. Certainly art in the workplace fosters a democratic corporate culture where all levels of employees enjoy visual access.

The eight corporate collections represented in *Working with Prints* are a small percentage of the over 1,000 corporate collections that exist in the United States. Each of them reveals a unique way that a corporation can approach collecting art. The variety of corporate art collections and the ways in which they are assembled reflect the range and style not only of art that has been produced over the last century, but also of the history and diversity of American business.