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for their unwavering support throughout the past year.

PREFACE

In the Fall of 2011 I began a year-long project to catalogue the print collection of the Housatonic Museum of Art. As I examined the Museum's holdings, I kept a running list of objects of interest for possible use in two upcoming exhibitions. After only a few months, I could not help but notice a growing number of the prints on my list bore the chopmark of Collector's Press, a lithography workshop from which I had not seen work in years. I selected a few pieces to be featured in the first of two exhibitions I curated for the Museum, *Paper Trail: 15th Anniversary Celebration of the Burt Chernow Galleries*. By January of this year, however, the cache of Collector's Press prints was about 40 in number and I knew that the collection warranted a show of its own. At the end of the cataloguing project, the group of Collector's Press prints had grown to 75, and the exhibition really took shape.

The Art of Business: Collector's Press Lithographs is an examination of the history and output of this important lithography workshop. It is also a fitting way to end my time here at the Museum, as it brings me back full circle to the prints which first caught my eye in this impressive collection.

Maura Brennan
Curator of Prints and Drawings

ESSAY

When Ernest de Soto founded Collector's Press in San Francisco in 1967 he could not have chosen a more appropriate time or location to open a lithography workshop. The 1960s were a heady time for artists and California was where things were happening. The city of San Francisco had a rich history associated with the medium, and through de Soto's Mexican connections, he would make it an international venture. Although the press closed in 1972, its founder continued heading up lithography workshops until his retirement in 1993, and Collector's Press' spirit was subsumed in those subsequent ventures. By examining the man, the business and the art further, a more complete picture of Collector's Press and its importance emerges.



Chopmark of Ernest de Soto.

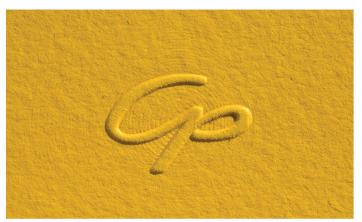
THE MAN

Born in Tucson, Arizona in 1923, de Soto left home after high school and moved to California at the tender age of seventeen. He began art classes at the Chouinard Art Institute in downtown Los Angeles, but his studies were interrupted when he was drafted into the Army on his eighteenth birthday. With an art background such as his, he was signed on as a camouflage technician and served in the South Pacific. Upon returning home, de Soto settled briefly back in Los Angeles where he studied under influential lithographer Lynton Kistler, before moving to Mexico.

Funding his education in Mexico with the G.I. Bill, de Soto took classes at Escuela de Bellas Artes, the University of Guadalajara and Instituto Allende. He studied drawing and painting with some of the country's most famous and beloved artists, including José Clemente Orozco, Rufino Tamayo and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Of Hispanic descent, de Soto spoke Spanish, and made the transition to the new country and the new colleagues, quite easily.

¹ Briggs, Peter. "The De Soto Workshop," exhibition catalogue. Tucson, Arizona: Graficas Gallery, 2006, p. 6. Print.

Returning to the United States in the 1950s, de Soto finished his B.F.A. degree in 1955 (from the University of Illinois) and took teaching positions from New York to Cleveland. Professionally, his association with the lithography medium began in earnest when he started teaching the technique at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana in 1959. Thanks to a two-year grant from the Ford Foundation, de Soto began an apprenticeship in 1965 with the famed Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles. After completion of the program in 1967, he earned the coveted title of Master Printer and opened Collector's Press in San Francisco. For the next 26 years he would direct lithography workshops in the "city by the Bay" until retiring in 1993 to return home to his native Arizona.



Chopmark of Collector's Press.

THE BUSINESS

The Collector's Press story is not just the history of a particular lithography firm, but rather the tale of the rewards, responsibilities and difficulties of the business of art. Creativity and solvency do not often go together, but when in charge of a press that prints and publishes fine art, one must find a way to maintain both. De Soto prepared himself for the specific challenges of running an art-related business by co-founding Collector's Press with a colleague who taught business practices at Tamarind.² Tamarind made sure that their graduates were not only well-trained in the technical aspects of lithography, but that they were educated in the practical aspects of running a print shop, as well.³ With a partner focused on business matters, de Soto could concentrate on artistic and technical matters.

The location of the business in San Francisco was important. Part of the Tamarind mandate to promote lithography in the United States included training Master Printers who would spread out over the country and open their own lithographic workshops. ⁴ Tamarind had cornered the market in Los Angeles, so de Soto headed north to the Bay Area to set up shop.

The city of San Francisco held particular significance for lithographers, as decades earlier it had been a leader in West Coast lithography production, thanks to the Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project (WPA/

2 Briggs, Peter. "Re: Ernest Desoto (sic)." Message to the author. 21 Sept. 2012. E-mail.

3 Adams, Clinton. "An Informed Energy: Lithography and Tamarind." *Tamarind Institute*. 1997. Web. 13 Oct. 2012.

4 Ibid.

FAP).⁵ When the San Francisco lithography unit first opened in 1935, it was originally conceived as an overflow department meant to absorb the increasing numbers of artists applying to WPA/FAP projects in Northern California. By the end of the project in the early 1940s, 52,000 lithographs had been printed and the department proved how stimulating its work had been.⁶ In addition to printing lithographs made by artists in San Francisco, the unit developed a transfer paper which they sent out to artists living throughout California, and later Oregon, Washington, Nevada, New Mexico and Arizona.⁷ With this paper, artists could draw "on a surface that approximated stone" and send their drawings back to headquarters to be transferred to a lithographic stone and printed. Thanks to this technology, many artists who might not have had the opportunity to make a lithograph, were able to do so, and San Francisco was at the center of it all.

With such a rich history of leadership in lithography before WWII, San Francisco also was tempting as a location for Collector's Press because of its general lure as a post-war art center. "In the late 1940s, San Francisco became an important outpost for the redefinition and continuing evolution of Abstract Expressionism." With new directors at influential institutions like the California School of Fine Arts (CSFA), and an influx of veterans returning from war, enrollment was up at area art schools and a sense of vitality was injected into the city. Temporary teaching assignments at CSFA drew East Coast artists like Stanley William Hayter and Mark Rothko to the West Coast, and the printmaking and artistic trends from New York make their way across the country. The 1950s saw the development of the West Coast's answer to Abstract Expressionism is the form of the Bay Area Figurative Movement with luminaries like Nathan Oliveira [Figure 1] making their mark in the style through prints. A decade later, San Francisco would play host to the Hippie counterculture that defined a generation through its anti-war sentiment, and artists like Robert Fried would use lithography to illustrate the rock and roll music associated with the times. All these trends centered on the city that de Soto chose for the location of his business, a city that was alive and everchanging, open to influences from a myriad of sources. Perhaps this is why Collector's Press printed a range of stylistic work, never completely restricting itself to certain artists or particular trends. It truly represented the times by publishing the works of current and notable artists of the era, either singly or together in portfolios, like 10 West Coast Artists.

De Soto took his role as Master Printer seriously. He once said,

"An artist can print his own work, but a printer-artist, as I call him, is first of all a printer. He is more skillful than an artist-printer in terms of technical knowledge. A printer can suggest more things than an artist is aware of. The Master Printer also must be inventive in helping the artist to achieve any special effects he wishes, and above all, a Master Printer cannot make mistakes."

⁵ Wechsler, James. "The Lithography Unit of the Federal Art Project in Northern California," *Second Impressions: Modern Prints & Printmakers Reconsidered.*Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1996, p. 80. Print.

⁶ Ibid., p. 78.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Acton, David. *The Stamp of Impulse: Abstract Expressionist Prints.* Worcester, MA: Worcester Art Museum, 2001, p. 11. Print.

^{10 &}quot;First Hispanic Master Printer Ernest de Soto Offers Show, Workshops in Kingsville." Texas A&M University at Kingsville News Release, October 4, 2006. *Highbeam Business*. Web. 13 Oct. 2012.

De Soto proved this commitment once when working with an artist that required very hard pencils in order to draw delicate details for a lithograph. The pencils available commercially did not suffice, so the Master Printer made his own. ¹¹ Collector's Press rose to all the challenges of the day. If an artist needed to work with metallic inks or foil papers, as was the trend in the late 1960s-early 1970s, then Ernest de Soto made sure that they worked out the kinks of printing with those materials, in order to realize the artist's vision. Important artists like Enrico Baj, with whom de Soto had worked many times, liked experimenting with printing on non-traditional surfaces such as plastic, acetate and foils. Under the skillful hands of printer, Larry Neid, the Press was able to oblige the artist's needs in prints like Baj's *San Francisco Phantom*. [Figure 2]

Generous with his time and talents, de Soto supported other printmakers, artists and artisans, who all contributed to the print renaissance of the period. When he heard that Kathryn Clark, a fellow Tamarind printer whom he employed at Collector's Press, was interested in making handmade paper, he encouraged her. When she and her husband, Howard Clark, created their first sheets, he tested them. As a result, Twinrocker Handmade Paper was born in 1971, and brought about a renaissance of its own in hand papermaking in this country. De Soto even used their paper for Twinrocker's first special edition of lithographs, a Collector's Press suite by Jose Luis Cuevas entitled *Cuevas' Comedies*. ¹² [Figure 3]

With the distinction of being the first Hispanic Master Printer in the United States, de Soto took an interest in Latin American artists and Collector's Press saw a great many of them come through its doors. He also traveled extensively, bringing lithography materials and instruction to Hispanic artists who could not come to San Francisco. Over the years he worked with greats like Cuevas, Tamayo, Abularach [Figure 4] and Siqueiros.

Despite proper business planning, a good location and technical prowess, Collector's Press fell prey to the changing economic climate and closed in 1972. That same year de Soto joined forces with Jose Luis Cuevas and opened Editions Press. After three years, it closed. De Soto bought the equipment from his former partner, reorganized, and in 1975 opened the Ernest F. de Soto Workshop. All three presses were in San Francisco, but the third time was the charm for de Soto— the lithography workshop he named after himself lasted until his retirement in 1993.

The fact that Ernest de Soto ran a lithography workshop in San Francisco from 1967 to 1993 led many to the false assumption that Collector's Press was in operation until then. Despite the name changes and revolving door of business partners, the spirit of Collector's Press endured. As the Master Printer at all three workshops, de Soto gave his utmost to meet the technical challenges of each printing job. Most importantly, the opportunities and support that he first extended to Latin American artists at Collector's Press only increased in his later ventures. His significant contributions to the Latin American and American art markets are his legacy and mark the true art of his business.

THE ART

Ultimately, the artistic output of Collector's Press is the real indicator of the impressive abilities of the workshop. Able to attract established artists and experienced printmakers as well as newcomers, de Soto capitalized on his reputation as a printer. In the first few years of business, it was not surprising that the artists making prints at Collector's Press were a mix of old acquaintances from Tamarind, like Frank Lobdell, [Figure 5] and Latin American stars like Rodolfo Abularach.

De Soto also brought women to the workshop, whether as printers like Kathryn Clark, or printmakers like Deborah Remington [Figure 6]. Other big names in the print world graced the premises of the shop and the works of Nathan Oliveira, the only printmaker in the Bay Area Figurative Movement, and Garo Antreasian, [Figure 7] former Technical Director of Tamarind, came off the presses. Having the likes of Oliveira and Antreasian, professional artists and printers in their own right, make lithographs at the workshop was the greatest vote of confidence.

The appeal of Collector's Press was not restricted to the United States or Latin America. De Soto worked with European artists who had come to the United States, like Hans Burkhardt [Figure 8], as well as Asian artists like Masuo Ikeda [Figure 9]. He also attracted American artists who had spent time studying abroad and whose art represented those outside influences. Calligraphic prints by Ulfert Wilke [Figure 10] bear the unmistakable feel of Japan, while lithographs by Arthur Secunda [Figure 11] show the palette and drama of Mexico.

The press could accommodate the myriad of styles that artists brought to the studio. Whether the final lithograph exhibited the influence of collage on the artist's work, as in Emerson Woelffer's lithograph [Figure 12], or the convergence of Abstract Expressionism and Color Field painting, as in Ray Parker's print [Figure 13], the professionals at the Press could handle it. Collector's Press could also overcome technical challenges inherent in an artist's work. When printing dark passages over color, as in Sam Tchakalian's *Fuzz* [Figure 14], or printing pale colors with subtle embossing, as in Mel Ramos' *Pelicana* [Figure 15], the compositions were not lost.

From the first lithograph that rolled off the press, Felix Ruvolo's *Samson and Delilah* from 1967 [Figure 16], to the last, Sheldon Schoneberg's *Le Maquillage* from 1972, the output of Collector's Press represents the ability, creativity and strength of this lithographic workshop. With the artistic connections, technical savvy and heart of Ernest de Soto at the helm, the business was positioned to make a mark in the print world, and for five years it did. Collector's Press is the story of a man, a business, and the art that resulted from it. De Soto proved that the business of art is an art unto itself.

¹¹ Briggs 2006, Op.cit.

^{12 &}quot;History," Twinrocker. Web. 28 Nov. 2011.



Figure 1 Nathan Oliveira, $Miramar\ I,$ 1969, Lithograph, Gift of Herbert Lust III, 1984.21.34.



Figure 2 Enrico Baj, *San Francisco Phantom*, 1969, Lithograph, Gift of Herbert and Virginia Lust, 1973.29.12.



Jose Luis Cuevas, *The Giantess in Matisse's Atelier*, from the series "Cuevas' Comedies," 1971, Lithograph, Gift of Herbert Lust III, 1984.21.26.

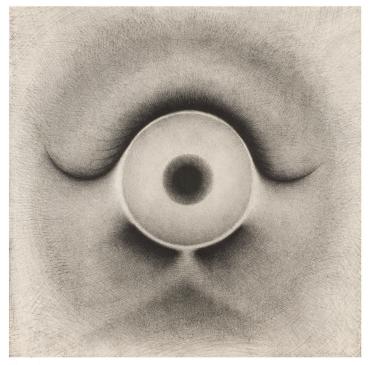


Figure 4 Rodolfo Abularach, *The Eye*, 1968, Lithograph, Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.20.



Figure 5 Frank Lobdell, *Untitled*, from the portfolio "10 West Coast Artists," 1967, Lithograph, Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.18.

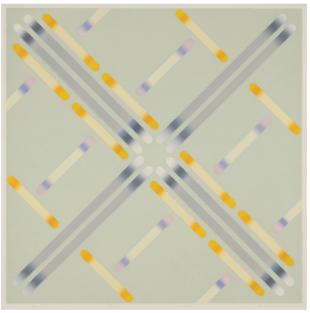


Figure 7 Garo Antreasian, *Untitled*, 1970, Lithograph, Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.52.

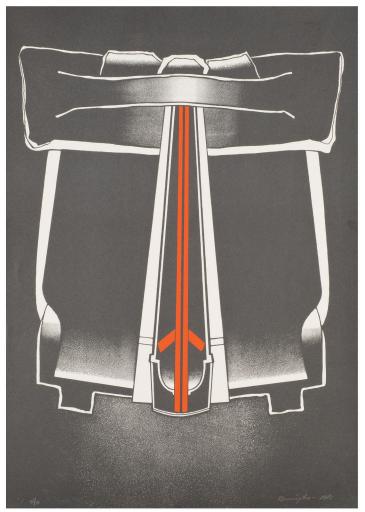


Figure 6 Deborah Remington, *Untitled*, 1968, Lithograph, Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.30.

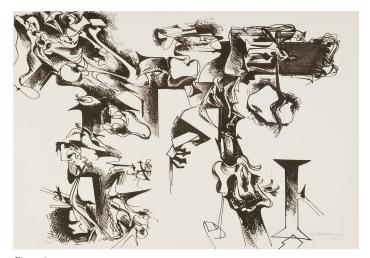


Figure 8
Hans Burkhardt, *Untitled*, 1967, Lithograph, Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.22.

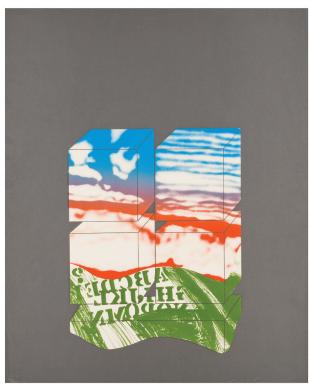


Figure 9 Masuo Ikeda, *Landscape in the Day*, from the series "Some Town Without a Name," 1969-70, Lithograph, Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.50.



Figure 11 Arthur Secunda, *Fireball*, 1971, Lithograph, Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.54.



Figure 10 Ulfert Wilke, *Untitled*, 1968, Lithograph, Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.34.



Figure 12 Emerson Woelffer, *The Big Kiss*, 1968, Lithograph, Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.31.

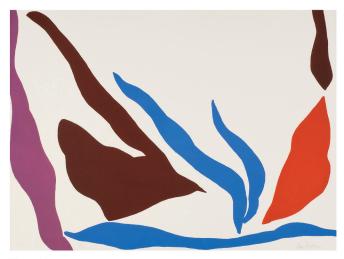


Figure 13 Raymond Parker, *Untitled*, 1968, Lithograph, Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.25



Figure 15 Mel Ramos, Pelicana, 1969, Lithograph and embossing, Gift of Herbert Lust III, 1973.29.3.



Figure 14 Sam Tchakalian, *Fuzz*, 1967, Lithograph, Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.14.

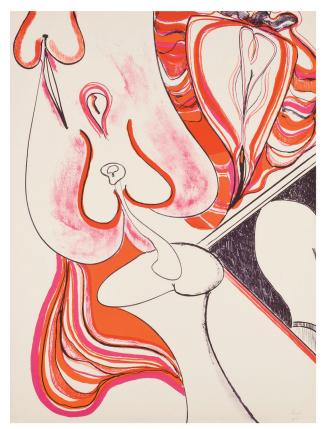


Figure 16 Felix Ruvolo, *Samson and Delilah*, from the portfolio "10 West Coast Artists," 1967, Lithograph, Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.12.

CHECKLIST

*CP #s refer to the Collector's Press numbers inscribed on the back of each print, above the chopmark.

Rodolfo Abularach

The Eye, 1968 Lithograph on cream Arches wove paper, 42/50 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.20 56.5 x 56.5 cm (image and sheet) CP #114

Garo Antreasian

Untitled, 1970 Lithograph on cream paper, 54/60 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.52 58.7 x 58.7 cm (image-sight) CP #236

Enrico Baj

Punching General, 1969 Lithograph on cream Arches wove paper, 3/90 Gift of Herbert and Virginia Lust, 1973.29.11 66.2 x 51 cm (image and sheet) CP #179

San Francisco Phantom, 1969 Lithograph on paper mounted on cream Rives BFK wove paper, 17/45 Gift of Herbert and Virginia Lust, 1973.29.12 65.5 x 50.8 cm (image and sheet) 75.8 x 56.2 cm (mount) CP #178

Hans Burkhardt

Untitled, 1967 Lithograph on cream wove paper, 17/50 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.22 50.1 x 64.7 cm (image) 50.1 x 72 cm (sheet) CP #119

Bruce Conner

Return to Go, from the portfolio "10 West Coast Artists," 1967 Lithograph on cream wove paper, 37/75 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.10 76.8 x 55.9 cm (image and sheet) CP #105

Edward Corbett

Untitled, 1967 Lithograph on cream wove paper, 50/50 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.17 64.2 x 56.1 cm (image and sheet) CP #107

Jose Luis Cuevas

The Giantess in Matisse's Atelier, from the series "Cuevas' Comedies," 1971, Lithograph on cream wove paper, 30/100 Gift of Herbert Lust III, 1984.21.26 75.1 x 56 cm (image) 76.8 x 57.4 cm (sheet) CP #254

Recollections, from the series "Cuevas' Comedies," 1971 Lithograph and embossing on cream wove paper, 72/100 Gift of Herbert and Virginia Lust, 1975.3.2 53.4 x 66.7 cm (image) 56.5 x 76.5 cm (sheet) CP #255

Robert Fried

Between Time and Space, 1971 Lithograph on cream paper, 41/100 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.56 92.7 x 77.5 cm (framed) CP #249

Masuo Ikeda

Some Town Without a Name - A, from the series "Some Town Without a Name," 1969-70 Lithograph on cream Arches wove paper, 13/55 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.48 53.5 x 66 cm (image and sheet) CP #214

Landscape in the Day, from the series "Some Town Without a Name," 1969-70, Lithograph on Arches wove paper, 39/55 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.50 66.5 x 53.7 cm (image and sheet) CP #221

After Dinner - A, from the series "Some Town Without a Name," 1969-70, Lithograph on cream Arches wove paper, 17/55
Gift of Herbert Lust III, 1984.21.41
53.4 x 66 cm (image and sheet)
CP #211

Matsumi "Mike" Kanemitsu

San Francisco 38, 1968 Lithograph on cream wove paper, 61/80 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.11 76.5 x 57 cm (image and sheet) CP #149

Frank Lobdell

Untitled, from the portfolio "10 West Coast Artists," 1967 Lithograph on cream wove paper, 32/75 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.18 57.1 x 76.5 cm (image and sheet) CP #109

Fred Martin

Nosegays for Lovers, 1967 Lithograph on cream Arches wove paper, 36/44 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.21 56.6 x 76.4 cm (image and sheet) CP #116

Charles Mattox

Untitled, 1967 Lithograph on cream wove paper, 47/50 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.23 57.5 x 41.8 cm (image) 75.6 x 54.1 cm (sheet) CP #120

Robert Natkin

Steps, 1969 Lithograph on cream wove paper, 38/75 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.3 73.5 x 54.8 cm (image) 78.4 x 60.8 cm (sheet) CP #196

Field Mouse I, 1969 Lithograph on cream wove paper, 64/75 Gift of Herbert Lust III, 1984.21.32 69 x 60.4 cm (image-sight) CP #199

Manuel Neri

Couple of Girls, from the portfolio "10 West Coast Artists," 1967 Lithograph on cream Rives BFK wove paper, 35/75 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.15 75.8 x 52 cm (image) 76 x 56.2 cm (sheet) CP #104

Nathan Oliveira

Miramar I, 1969 Lithograph on cream Rives BFK wove paper, 38/75 Gift of Herbert Lust III, 1984.21.34 69.5 x 56.5 cm (image) 76.4 x 56.5 cm (sheet) CP #156

Miramar III, 1969 Lithograph on buff Arches wove paper, 20/40 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.8 57.2 x 57 cm (image) 76.4 x 57 cm (sheet) CP #158-A

Raymond Parker

Untitled, 1968
Lithograph on cream wove paper, 68/75
Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.25
56.6 x 75.9 cm (image and sheet)
CP #122

Josep Pla-Narbona

Act I, 1969 Lithograph on cream Arches wove paper, 48/70 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.41 57.1 x 76.3 cm (image and sheet-sight) CP #200

Mel Ramos

Fly Catcher, 1969 Lithograph on cream Arches wove paper, 86/100 Gift of Herbert and Virginia Lust, 1973.29.1 66.2 x 50.9 cm (image) 71.2 x 57 cm (sheet) CP #181

Pelicana, 1969 Lithograph and embossing on cream Arches wove paper, 37/100 Gift of Herbert and Virginia Lust, 1973.29.3 71.5 x 57 cm (image and sheet) CP #184

Deborah Remington

Untitled, 1968
Lithograph on cream wove paper, 46/50
Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.30
72 x 51.2 cm (image and sheet)
CP #138

Felix Ruvolo

Samson and Delilah, from the portfolio "10 West Coast Artists," 1967 Lithograph on cream Arches wove paper, 36/75 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.12 76.5 x 55.8 cm (image) 76.5 x 56.7 cm (sheet) CP #101

Arthur Secunda

Objects on the Beach, 1970 Lithograph on cream Arches wove paper, 29/90 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.53 76.5 x 56.7 cm (image and sheet) CP #246

Fireball, 1971 Lithograph on cream Arches wove paper, 21/90 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.54 76.6 x 56.9 cm (image and sheet) CP #247

Encounter, 1968
Lithograph on cream Arches wove paper, 69/80
Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.57
56.9 x 76.3 cm (image and sheet)
CP #191

Norman Stiegelmeyer

Transformation, 1968 Lithograph on cream wove paper, 23/50 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.24 50 x 71.5 cm (image and sheet) CP #121

Sam Tchakalian

Fuzz, 1967 Lithograph on cream Arches wove paper, 23/50 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.14 76.6 x 56.9 cm (image and sheet) CP #103

Ulfert Wilke

Untitled, 1968 Lithograph on cream wove paper, 37/60 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.34 57.5 x 42 cm (image) 61.2 x 47.2 cm (sheet) CP #144

Untitled, 1968 Lithograph on cream wove paper, 39/60 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.37 61.5 x 47.5 cm (image and sheet) CP #147

Emerson Woelffer

The Big Kiss, 1968 Lithograph on cream wove paper, 54/60 Gift of Naomi Lazard, 1973.30.31 57.7 x 46.2 cm (image and sheet) CP #139 Housatonic Museum of Art 900 Lafayette Boulevard Bridgeport, CT 06604

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