

POINTS OF VIEW

March 7 - June 8, 1975

Wall Label

This exhibition of prints, organized according to thematic focus, offers a comparison of familiar with unfamiliar images. Five themes have been selected: death, work, theater, water, and windows. These themes clearly were not chosen to form a predetermined pattern; rather they were proposed by the artists' work itself, by recurrent concerns and interests evident throughout a century of printmaking.

Each theme provides a means of comparing the attitudes, activities, and inner thoughts of artists who for the most part lived in the period between the 1840s and 1940s when dynamic changes altered the way of life for successive generations. In the decades surrounding the turn of the century new political, social, aesthetic, and scientific ideas were assessed. Technical developments included the introduction of electricity for daily use, the telephone, the automobile, the airplane, and the moving picture. Inventions which were to affect artists directly included photography and photomechanical processes which eliminated the need for engraving or lithography as a means of documentation.

The majority of the twenty-six artists whose work is included in the exhibition were born before 1900. These artists in the nineteenth or twentieth century inevitably experienced the world through the limitations of their generation and class. Even death knows a cultural climate. To some death means fear of the end of life, and to others it is the superstition surrounding a mystery. Death is also viewed as the symbol of the mortality of human relationships. Work is seen as an occupation, a recreation, or a means of social and political interaction. The theater is a place of action, natural or artificial, but heightened and glorified. Water is experienced as a symbolic or real boundary to be crossed or as an element with specific helpful or harmful properties. Windows are portrayed as objects for seeing through and into, or as frames for exterior or interior space or action.

John Sloan writes in his diary of July 6, 1911: "I am in the habit of watching every bit of human life I can see about my windows, but I do it so that I am not observed at it. I 'peep' through real interest, not being observed myself. I feel that it is no insult to the people you are watching to do so unseen, but that to do it openly and with great expression of amusement is an evidence of real vulgarity."

All artists are in a sense voyeurs, stimulated to make notations on life around them, becoming thereby the monitors of an epoch, recorders of the essence of an age. Solitary or social, each artist chooses a group of subjects from which to work. The examples selected and juxtaposed in this exhibition point up their contrasts and similarities-- and their humorous ironies.

Howardena Pindell

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