



## Welcome to Connecting Print Studios

This exhibition is a celebration of the wealth and diversity of spaces for printmaking in the UK and internationally, and showcases a varied selection of studios working today.

The starting point for this exhibition goes back to 1964 when Richard Hamilton was teaching at Newcastle University and began working with magazine images of the actress Marilyn Monroe. The resulting work, *'My Marilyn'* (screenprint, 1965) is on show in The Hatton Gallery as part of the current exhibition *'Print Goes Pop'*.

The story behind the making of this iconic screenprint epitomises the often overlooked role production facilities play in the creation of artworks.

Pop Artists fell in love with screenprinting for its vivid flat colours and ability to recycle images from mass media. However, in 1965 Newcastle University's Fine Art department didn't have the facilities for this exciting new printmaking process. Fortunately Hamilton was able to borrow screens from the textiles department - but the story of the print's production doesn't end there. Hamilton found he didn't have the technical skills to produce a consistent edition of prints and so enlisted the help of Chris Prater of Kelpra Studios in London.

Kelpra Studios was a print studio specialising in screenprinting that work collaboratively with many of the leading artists of the day such as Joe Tilson, Victor Pasmore and Bridget Riley. With Chris Prater's expertise *'My Marilyn'* was printed in an edition of 75 and sold through the pioneering print publishers Editions Alecto.

The story of the creation of *'My Marilyn'* shows how important access to facilities and technical know-how is to making prints. Whatever print medium artists choose to explore and exploit they need the equipment, materials and technical skills to do so. This is as true today as it was when Hamilton made *'My Marilyn'*. By bringing together artists with professional facilities, high quality materials and technical expertise print studios are critical to this.

This exhibition of photographs from a series of print studios in the UK and internationally aims to throw the spotlight onto these places of making and to show what a wealth of spaces there are for artists to make prints.

The studios included in this exhibition are just a very small selection. It is not intended to be comprehensive or representative. Many interesting studios are not included and countries with long traditions of printmaking as well as many with new, exciting scenes for print are also missing. However, it is hoped that it might prompt others to be curious to seek out studios close to home or further afield.

This exhibition encompasses both collaborative studios and open access studios – many, like Kelpra Studios, have their roots in the 1960s when printmaking became an integral part of an artists' making-

processes. Many of the print studios are also part of larger arts centres, with others expanding into galleries, print publishing and community programmes.

The collaborative studios included in this exhibition are Kip Gresham Editions and Artists Press. These studios are generally run commercially and work closely with artists to produce editions of prints. Some collaborative studios publish and sell the editions themselves, selecting the artists they wish to work with, funding this and generating an income from sales. Others are contracted by galleries and print publishers to work with their artists for a fee, the prints then being sold by the gallery. These relationships between printer and artist are fundamental to the work produced.

Often, though not always, the artist has very limited technical skills in print and rely on the printer to achieve their desired results. For this partnership to be fruitful the printer needs to have a great deal of insight into each individual artist's work, working methods and ideas. Kip Gresham has talked about visiting each artist's studio before they begin working together and seeing how they operate within their own studio. Are the paintbrushes all clean and neatly arranged or is it a riot of activity?

There are many highly skilled printers who have played an integral role in an artists' prints whose names often go unacknowledged. Working with a collaborative printer is often out of reach for many artists due to costs and when it comes to printing an edition of prints it can be a financially-risky business.

The close collaboration and input of skills and insights from an experienced printer can have a valuable impact on an artist's wider practice. Directors of collaborative studios such as Kathan Brown of Crown Point Press, USA; Birgit Skiöld of The Print Studio, London and Tatyana Grosman of Universal Limited Art Editions, USA have played a crucial role not only in the prints created but also the development of the artists they worked with. Many of the images submitted by the collaborative studios for this exhibition showed artist and printer considering a proof as it comes off the press.

Keith Brintzenhofe (printer and Studio Manager at Universal Limited Art Editions) recalled how Director Tatyana Grosman would often ask a simple question to prompt a critical reflection by the artist, such as: *"Do you think the green is right?"* He commented, *"Perhaps the green was right. But by making one reanalyze, by tangling the skein of one's complacency, she restarted the creative and critical process."*

Kathan Brown's memoir, 'Know That You Are Lucky' gives a wonderful insight into the life of Crown Point Press as well as an intimate portrait of working so closely with many leading artists such as Sol Le Witt, Richard Diebenkorn and John Cage. The films made by the studio documenting these collaborations can be viewed on the Crown Point Press website and give a rare insight of both the printmaking process and each artist.

For a print studio of any kind to succeed it needs more than printing presses, ink and paper. Experienced technical staff who can nurture, support and encourage artists to realise their ideas is vital. They have the skills to help manage the tension between what is desired visually and conceptually and the practicalities of a process – even just the size of a printing press itself can inform how a work might be made or exist in its final state. American artist Kiki Smith sums this up perfectly:

*"I really love printmaking. It's like a mystery and you're trying to figure out how to rein it in."*

As printmaking became an integral part of fine art practice more studios emerged, not just collaborative studios but also open-access print studios. The earliest was Edinburgh Printmakers set up in 1967 and here in Newcastle, Charlotte Press was established soon after.

Open access studios were set up to provide low-cost access to printmaking equipment. The printing presses and other equipment were too costly for most artists to afford but by sharing facilities printmaking became something they could do. Often open-access studios were set up by graduates wanting to continue with printmaking after leaving college facilities behind. Low cost access to printmaking facilities for all remains the fundamental ethos of open access studios.

Printmaking and its ability to disseminate ideas to all has always been considered the most democratic of artforms but in many ways open access print studios are an extension of this ideal.

Many of the open access print studios in this exhibition also have a wider programme of activities. This includes bursaries, residencies, commissions and exhibitions. They often have a wider social remit offering community printmaking sessions, outreach and learning programmes. Some of the studios also have low-cost living accommodation to host visiting artists.

More than anything when I look at these photos of studios I see not only spaces for creating prints, I am tantalized by the tools of the trade waiting to be used, the colour charts and inks like jars in a sweetie shop. I also see a place for people. Print studios are places of connections – between each other, artists and their communities. They are places of possibilities. Every studio has its own distinct focus but is also linked to a wider network of studios that share a sensibility for print. At Northern Print we have worked with many international artists and the lack of any common language never seems to be a barrier to connecting and understanding. The common endeavour and generosity of spirit found in print studios occupy a space beyond verbal language.

Many of the photos from the studios show people deep in conversation looking at their work – sharing responses and ideas about the next stage or perhaps wondering if it is in fact finished. Alongside the printing presses, machinery and studio spaces kitchens are an important part of any studio. Printmaking inevitably involves waiting for something to etch, soak or dry – often just the right amount of time to make a pot of coffee. The sharing of lunch and the coming together to clean tools and talk are an equally rich part of studio life.

Each studio has the same essential elements, perhaps the same model of press, type of ink or the signs that give universal instructions such as ‘clean hands only’. Each studio shares fundamentally the same processes, but each has its own way of doing things. Solutions which respond to their particular space and its limitations, climate (critical to some processes) and culture.

This exhibition is a small selection but shows the wealth and diversity of spaces for artists to make prints. Many have bursary and residency programmes, and those that don’t are often receptive to visiting artists. Print Studios are places of possibilities in so many ways.

Newcastle University’s Fine Art department developed facilities for screenprinting soon after ‘My Marilyn’ was completed. Today the printmaking studios have excellent facilities for all the traditional printmaking processes as well as new technologies such as lasercutting and digital printing that have been co-opted as part of the printmaker’s toolkit.

Students here have an unparalleled opportunity to learn printmaking, to find out for themselves what these processes might offer their practice. Once learnt these printmaking skills can open doors to any number of print studios around the world.

Anna Wilkinson, Director, Northern Print

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**This exhibition forms part of a wider project. Other activities include**

- *Future Print Studios* - an online event for leaders of print studios in UK and internationally
- Workshops for young people to widen participation in higher education in art and design
- Mini-bursaries for recent graduates to access printmaking
- Virtual visits to six international print studios for the general public

**With thanks to:**

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Professor Richard Talbot, Director, Institute for Creative Arts Practice and Professor of Contemporary Drawing, Newcastle University

Mel Whewell, Institutes & Partnerships Manager, Newcastle University

All the studios taking part in the exhibition: Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Ireland; Double Elephant Print Workshop, UK; East London Printmakers, UK; Edinburgh Printmakers, UK; GG Print Studio, Sweden; Glasgow Print Studio, UK; Highland Print Studio, UK; Hot Bed Press, UK; Jerusalem Print Workshop, Israel; Kala Art Institute, USA; Kip Gresham Editions, UK; La Trampa Gráfica Contemporánea, Mexico; Ratamo Printmaking and Photography Centre, Finland; T.A.C.O. Talleres de Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico; Two Rivers Printmaking Studio, USA; Spike Print Studio, UK.

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*Connecting Young People with Print and with Print Studios across the World* is a research & engagement collaboration managed in partnership between Northern Print, Newcastle University and Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM). These events coincide with the exhibition [Print Goes Pop](#) at the Hatton Gallery. This is the latest in a series of Pop-Art themed exhibitions at the Hatton Gallery, which has strong links with the art movement of the 1950s and 60s.



QR code for link to Crown Point Press films

QR code for Northern Print films