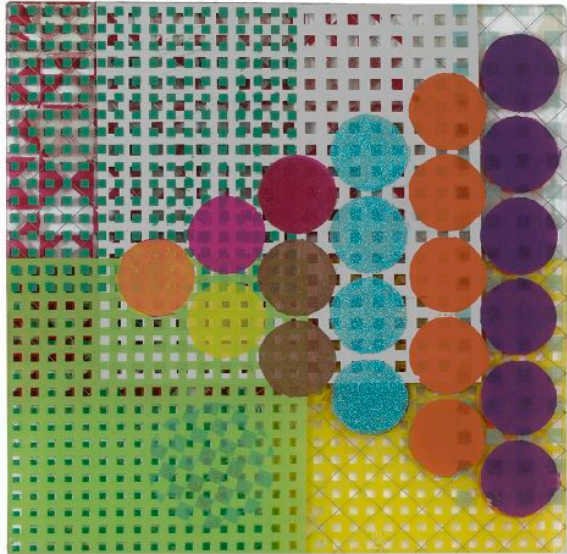


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 2013

ALAN SHIELDS

Inventive Editions 1973 - 2001



Chicken Shit, 1974, two-sided serigraph on wire reinforced glass, 14 x 14 in



Milan Fog, 1980, woodcut, etching, aquatint, stitching, collage on 3 layers of handmade paper by Tyler Graphics, 40 x 31 in

From June 7 through July 8, The Drawing Room in East Hampton is pleased to present **ALAN SHIELDS Inventive Editions 1973-2001**, an exhibition of twenty-one prints that reveal the groundbreaking ingenuity and evolving ideas the late artist introduced to his extensive body of graphic work. In editions that often combined varied printmaking techniques with stitching and collage, Shields consistently incorporated a distinctive vocabulary of multicolored geometric forms that coalesce in exuberant compositions with aptly playful titles. On view concurrently, **MEL KENDRICK** presents a selection of recent wood and cast concrete sculpture.

Arriving in New York in 1968 after studying engineering, theater and visual arts at Kansas State University, Alan Shields (1944-2005) quickly found his place in the city's vibrant art community at a time when traditional divisions between painting, sculpture and printmaking were being called into question. In keeping with the ethos of this new generation of Post-Minimalist artists responding to their Pop Art and Minimalist predecessors, Shields created work of various scales and mediums that emphasize process and rich experimentation with materials. Just as his early monumental canvas works gained notoriety for defying conventional parameters of painting and sculpture when first shown at the Paula Cooper Gallery, Shields' expansive use of printmaking techniques immediately earned him critical praise. Museum shows of his large canvas works were soon followed by recognition of his prints in important exhibitions focused on contemporary editions such as *New American Graphic Art* in 1973 at the Fogg Art Museum and *Printed, Cut, Folded, Torn* at MoMA in 1974.

Reflecting on printmaking's vital role in his creative life, Shields cited several influences gleaned from childhood experiences on the farm in rural Kansas where he was raised. There, he pointed out, collaboration was essential, whether in the fields or at the quilting circle formed by his mother and aunts. Likewise, industriousness, repurposing of materials and pleasure in addressing technical challenges all contributed to agricultural productivity. Shields even attributed his non-hierarchical perspective on the distinctions between painting, sculpture and printmaking to the rotation of crops that warrant equal and cyclical attention in the field.

(over)

Following the success of his first ambitious print produced with Bill Weege in 1971, Shields made numerous trips to work at Weege's experimental print shop in Barneveld, Wisconsin. Between 1971 and 1974 the two collaborated on over 30 editions that incorporated every imaginable printmaking practice from etching, screenprinting, lithography, woodcut and aquatint with techniques previously outside the fold such as embossing, flocking, stitching and perforation. During this period, Weege introduced Shields to Joe Wilfer, another key participant whose U.S. Paper Mill in Oregon, Wisconsin was a center for papermaking that opened new avenues of invention to Shields.

Facilitated by the technical contributions of Weege and Wilfer, Shields imbued a number of his early editions with remarkable sculptural presence. In the case of *Chicken Shit*, a two-sided serigraph on glass conceived to be suspended from a wire and to rotate freely in space, the three-dimensional emphasis of the work derives partly from the altered relationship of image to substrate, an extension of the effect of Shields' large-scale double-sided canvas works. Another iteration of the formal structure of his monumental open grids appears in several lattice prints made in 1973 and 1974. In *Cocles*, for example, Shields configured an open network of grids by interlacing narrow strips of screenprinted and flocked paper to dazzling effect. In this print that invites viewing from both sides, Shields activated the print's interior voids as well as its surrounding atmosphere. Later in the decade, prints such as *Soft Action* and *Armie's Tough Course* utilized papers Joe Wilfer formulated according to criteria Shields specified for maximum tactile effect.

In 1978, Shields was invited by Ken Tyler to make his first print with the noted print publisher, a relationship that soon spawned more sequences of innovative and layered prints. With Tyler's expertise and the publisher's new papermaking studio at his disposal, Shields was able to devise fresh means of generating openings within the structure of his textured imagery. By immersing taut grids of string in vats of paper pulp, they developed lace-like webbed patterns that Shields enhanced with relief printed color and stitched to other paper elements to form the map-like compositions of *Milan Fog* and *Josh's Route*. Other suites of prints, perhaps best defined as assemblage multiples, followed under the auspices of Tandem Press and Pace Editions.

In 1972 Shields bought a house and built a studio on Shelter Island, New York, maintaining his Manhattan studio until he moved to Long Island's East End full-time a decade later. His work is represented in numerous international museum collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Parrish Art Museum, the Walker Art Center and the Tate Collection in London.

Gallery hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 10-5; Sunday 11-5

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