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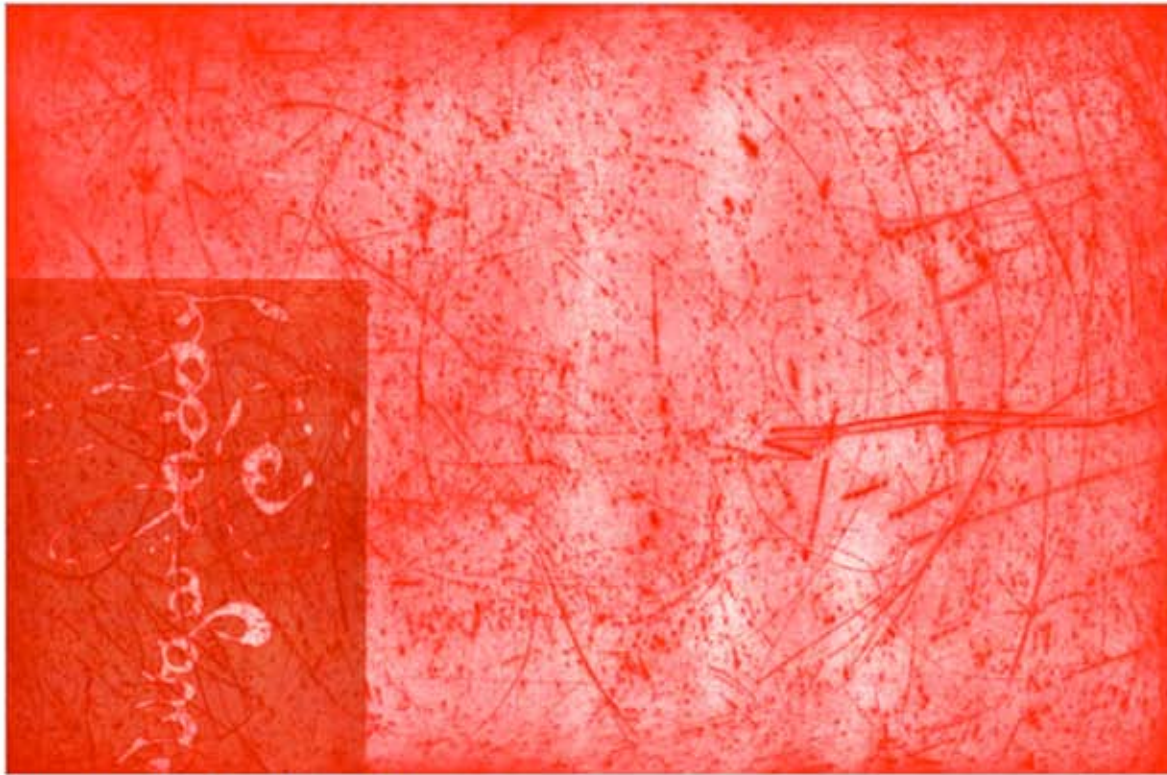
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ART REVIEW

Prints That Say Bold and Eclectic

By [BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO](#)



"Sugar Daddy" (2005) by Susan McClelland.

The delightful show of prints from Universal Limited Art Editions currently at the Heckscher Museum comes with a compelling story behind it.

U.L.A.E. is a publisher of fine art prints established in West Islip more than 50 years ago by Tatyana Grosman, a Russian immigrant. Ms. Grosman studied in Dresden at the Academy of Applied Arts; her husband, Maurice, was a painter. After he suffered a heart attack in the 1950's, she needed money and decided to publish illustrated books along with print reproductions of well-known paintings. She pretty much ran the business from the kitchen table in the couple's home.

In 1957, a conversation with a curator from the Museum of Modern Art led Ms. Grosman to consider working with living, contemporary artists to create original prints, rather than reproducing existing paintings. Early collaborations with Larry Rivers, Sam Francis, [Jasper Johns](#) and [Robert Rauschenberg](#) were an immediate success, vaulting U.L.A.E. to the forefront of art printmaking in America.

Today, under the direction of Bill Goldston, a printer who took over the business after Ms. Grosman's death in 1982, U.L.A.E. continues to collaborate with artists on limited-edition prints and the publishing of artists' books. The current show provides an overview of its activities, with a selection of prints in a range of techniques (etching, aquatint, mezzotint and lithography) by known and emerging artists including [Chuck Close](#), [Carroll Dunham](#), [Helen Frankenthaler](#), Elizabeth Murray, Cecily Brown and Rosa Loy.

Rauschenberg was a collaborator with U.L.A.E. from its early years until his death in 2008, and accordingly this show is something of a tribute to him. It includes a half-dozen of the artist's last prints from "The Lotus Series," for which he collaged together imagery of Chinese street life. Though probably not his best works, they have an endearing simplicity and charm.

Mr. Close is represented by a dark, detailed photogravure of Rauschenberg, in effect a portrait, with the artist looking out at the viewer. It is a perfect likeness, capturing something of the gentleness and generosity of spirit for which he was known, as well as his wide, disarming smile.

Mr. Johns's work is also well represented in this show, with six colorful prints in various media spanning the past two decades. They are all different in style, a testament to his versatility as a printmaker. My favorites are a pair of small, untitled mezzotints from 1995, each a tight bundle of intense, abstract calligraphic lines.

For sheer exhilaration in printmaking, it is hard to beat a pair of 2006 lithographs by Ms. Frankenthaler,

abstracts filled with broad sweeps of color, or Ms. Brown's "Footsie" (2000), an alluring, subtly toned, intensely red lithograph of a woman reclining on a divan, perhaps getting a foot massage. The image is abstract, so it's hard to tell exactly what's going on.

There is some extremely sophisticated printmaking here. Two of Jane Hammond's lithographs with silkscreen and collage are worth lingering over. "The Wonderfulness of Downtown" (1997) includes 39 colors, with each color requiring a separate printing plate. That's what I call dedication.

Nearby is an unusual-looking print by Susan McClelland, "Sugar Daddy" (2005), made with an experimental process in which liquid sugar is applied to the printing plate to help create a textured, pockmarked surface. There is no figurative image, so in a sense the printmaking technique is the subject of this curious work.

Mr. Goldston expanded the operation of U.L.A.E. after Ms. Grosman's death, collaborating with a younger generation of artists including James Siena, Lisa Yuskavage, Enrique Chagoya and Ellen Gallagher, all of whom have works here.

Mr. Chagoya's prints are especially memorable. "[Border Patrol](#) on Acid" (2007), based on a newspaper article about violence along the border between the United States and Mexico, shows a trigger-happy guard brandishing a weapon outside a castle in a dusty desert landscape. It suggests that the guard imagines himself a knight defending his realm.

The show is presented in two of the museum's four galleries, giving the individual pieces ample breathing room. There are helpful wall labels but there is no catalog. This show needs little explanation, however; by and large it is a collection of high-quality works by a wonderful range of artists.

"Robert Rauschenberg and His Contemporaries: Recent Prints From Universal Limited Art Editions," Heckscher Museum of Art, 2 Prime Avenue, Huntington, through April 5. Information: (631) 351-3250 or heckscher.org.