

Carl Heywood was born in Toronto in 1941. For the last twenty years he has been balancing two separate but related careers as artist and educator.

As an educator, he has taught art in Ontario at high school level for two years, printmaking and art theory at Community College for two years: painting, colour, composition, drawing and printmaking at university from 1973 to the present.

He is Full Professor in the Bachelor of Fine Art Program at Queen's University, Kingston, where he has inspired and stimulated young printmakers for the last fourteen years.

As an artist he lived and worked in Paris, France, for four years and has specialized in printmaking since working at Hayter's Atelier 17 there in 1967. He began to exhibit in the early 1970's and has shown in most of the International print biennales since that time: in Britain, Yugoslavia, Germany, Japan, United States, Poland and Canada, winning numerous awards. He has had over sixty one-person exhibitions including several at Mira Godard Gallery in Toronto. He works mostly in silkscreen, litho and etching. His print "Vanity Vanity" was selected by Canada for presentation to the seven heads of state of the western world at the Summit Conference in 1982. In 1983 his print "Red Niche" won an edition award at the world print biennale in San Francisco. His "Braque Variations" of 1984 won Ontario first prize in the action / impression exhibition and have been reproduced in the Toronto Dominion Bank calendar, Air Canada In Flight publications, and in the Best Contemporary Canadian Art, Joan Murray, 1987.

His prints have been purchased for the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of New York, the Victoria & Albert in London, the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, the National Gallery of Canada, Art Gallery of Ontario and dozens of other museums around the world. A major interview with him was published in Walter Jule's PRINTVOICE in 1985.

A Conversation with Carl Heywood

Q. *Carl, you've been involved in printmaking for some time now, in one way or another. Almost thirty years, if my calculations are correct. Those were important years in the history of printmaking. You must have seen some big changes during that period.*

JCH. We all probably think that our own period is more important than any other, but yes, I have seen many changes in the field of Printmaking. Would you like a list?

Q. Yes, please.

JCH. Okay. These will not be in any particular order. Just as they come to mind:

- the advent and acceptance of silkscreen as a major print medium
- the revival and expansion of lithography in North America
- the wider use of the mylar methods worldwide, which have helped to circumvent a lot of the old technical roadblocks
- the acceptance in North America of the normal European practice of collaborative printmaking enabling several people to pool their skills and imagination into the same image
- the advent of offset litho
- the explosion of colour in print
- the expansion of size in prints
- the combining of print media: litho with silkscreen and woodcut
- we now have a range and availability of printmaking supplies and papers that is unprecedented in history

This all means that the old preconceptions about how a print should look have evaporated. We have vastly increased our expectations of printmaking, and it turns out that there is almost no limit to the things we can do in print.

On another level, a big development in printmaking in Canada has been the establishment of art departments in so many universities across the country, including printmaking sections. Until the 1960's, there were not many places in Canada where a person could go to study art after high school. Now there are dozens of good art departments that include printmaking. This is good for the students, of course, but it also provides a support system for a core of artist / educators who are able to get on with their own work without having to wash dishes or depend on grants to support their art activities.

And finally there is now a well established network of printshops from coast to coast in Canada, and elsewhere. A person can go to share equipment and inspiration with like-minded print artists at about ten shops in Canada and has a ready-made contact with other shops in many countries elsewhere in the world.

Q. *Well there is quite a lot we could discuss in all that. For the moment, though, let's just focus a bit on one item you mentioned just now, and in the PRINTVOICE interview, (1.) the advent of the mylar method. Why do you rate this as such an important development, and why has it become such an important part of contemporary printmaking?*

JCH. It is an important development because it is a way into printmaking for someone who is not prepared to serve a long apprenticeship in the classical methods of making print images. Perhaps more important, it sidesteps all the mental blinkers that seem to go together with classical printmaking. In the old days print education seemed to be about what one could **not** do in print, how important it was to follow correct procedures, get the formulas right, and so forth. Those things are important, of course, but what a terrible way to start.

Q. *It certainly narrows your thinking before you even start conceiving your image. It tends to prolong the status quo.*

JCH. The mylar methods subvert those excesses of technique by making the technical part follow the conception of the image rather than precede it.

An early version of what we now call the mylar methods was litho transfer paper, but it was quite unreliable, not very satisfactory. With the transfer lithograph the image was not improved by the process, it was strikingly deteriorated. Artists like Redon, Delacroix, Kollowitz, even those passionate German expressionists, continued to use it nevertheless, presumably because they were intimidated by working directly on a stone, or because of the noise in the printshop, or because they preferred to work in the security and privacy of their own studios. So they drew and painted on the transfer paper and someone else put the result onto the stone for them. At that point they could come in to add or subtract directly on the stone if they so desired.

Q. *So you are saying that the mylar method can be regarded as a latter-day transfer paper?*

JCH. Yes, among other things. It is a foolproof system of transfer. Artists who prefer to work that way can do so without any deterioration of the image, and can do so in litho, screen, etching, and now woodcut.

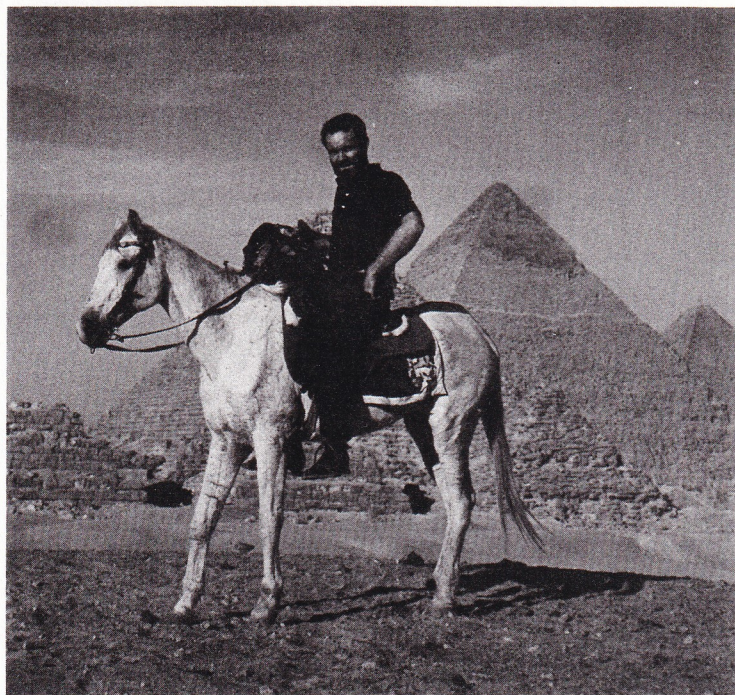
Q. *But in that case is the print not just a reproduction of the image made on the mylar?*

JCH. If you don't do anything else with it, yes it is a reproduction. But that is the limitation of the artist, not the method. Once you have your image on a printable matrix, plate or screen, you are plugged into the wonderful world of printmaking with all its boundless possibilities for transformation and development. The limitation then is the imagination and knowledge of the medium on the part of the artist / printmaker.

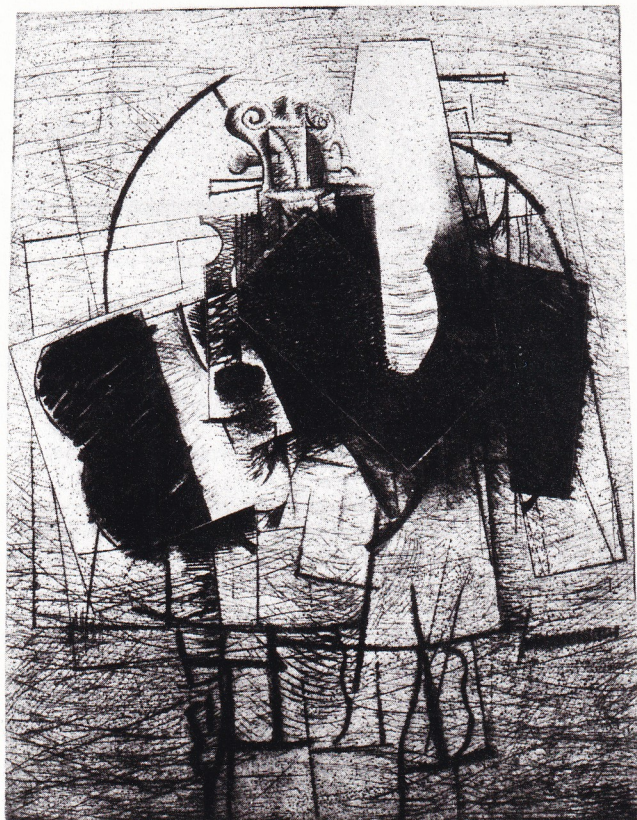
Q. *So you are comparing mylar with transfer paper rather than with photography.*

JCH. Certainly. You can use Kodaliths and photographically derived mylars but that is just one part of a whole spectrum of possibilities for generating images. With grained mylar for example, you have access to all your litho-stone drawing modes; with gouache / alcohol washes or xerox toner you have all your reticulation, curdled, peau-de-crapaud special effects; with your pen or brush and opaque ink you can make all those sorts of marks; with your vaporizer you can do your dot mists; with your toothbrush you can out-Toulouse Lautrec; with a negative material like Scriberite or black exposed film you can scratch, scribe, scrape, and sand to your heart's content. With film reversals you can move back and forth between positive and negative, easily and reliably without the anxiety and hit-and-miss uncertainty of your polymer or shellac reversals on stone or screen.

As soon as your image is transparent you can flip it left to right; or change its size if you have the right machines. A lot of my recent work in etching has been based on tiny drawings or parts of drawings made with a drypoint needle on Scriberite. They have been enormously inflated until they look as though they were drawn with an axe. My careful little graphite drawings on frosted mylar, when inflated, take on the quality of drawings made by a brute with a lump of coal.



Carl Heywood



KV147 St. Armand Bagatelle 1988
120 cm x 75 cm Etching & Drypoint



KV143 Japan Collé with Drums 1987
Etching with Chiné Collé



KV137 Japan Collé with Greens 1987

Q. Because of the dazzling complexity of techniques used in many contemporary prints, yours included, screenprints or etchings no longer look the way people expect them to look. Often several quite unrelated techniques contribute to a single image. Even expert printmakers have trouble identifying the means used to produce a particular image. Do you think an excess of technique can be a barrier between the artist and viewer?

JCH. Actually I am sometimes a bit surprised how little all that interests people, even fellow printmakers. Sometimes I can't help thinking that a certain passage in a print of mine is particularly dazzling and that my print colleagues will want to know the secret of how that was done. But almost no one asks those questions. I can only hope the reason is that the bits of virtuosity are absorbed into the total image, as they ought to be.

As for screenprints looking like screenprints, etchings like etchings and so forth; that sort of preconceived limitation on the medium is just what held down printmaking for so long. I think I said in the *PRINTVOICE* interview that it was when artists began asking print media to do things they'd never done before that we discovered there was far more to print than any of us had suspected. A good example; those dull, flat, pasty-looking, hard-edge screenprints we put up with for so many years were just one tiny fingernail of what silkscreen can really do. Again, the limitations are ours, not those of the medium. Far from being upset, I think the public takes a far greater interest in prints now that we are shedding those restrictions.

But just while we're on the subject, let me say again that these brilliant breakthrough techniques do not in any way devalue or replace the traditional means. *Au contraire*, they add to them, extend the artists range of choice. Learning new words doesn't mean you do away with old words. You just extend your ability to express thoughts.

Q. You said in the *PRINTVOICE* conversation, that in printmaking many different kinds of qualities can co-exist in the same image without any sense of discomfort, because they are all turned into ink.

JCH. Right. Modern scientific miracles like laser woodcuts are perfectly harmonious with the good old classic methods of printmaking. We lose nothing, just accumulate more and more options.

Q. Going back to transfer paper and the antecedents of the mylar methods for a moment, it is interesting that Ingres of all people seems to have used tracing paper a great deal to generate his images in his paintings. He would draw or trace the best bits of his own work, or other people's, and assemble a composite drawing of the pieces that went together and that was the framework of his composition.

By simplifying the structure to line, to trace the originals more easily, he would leave out much of the material of the original works. Then when he fleshed out the new compositional structure, he would personalize and harmonize the disparate elements so that the composition became unified and the original fragments were absorbed. They disappear in to the new whole.

You can look at the various versions of his works and see that he frequently reverses some parts of the composition and not others. Very easy to do when your drawing material is transparent. I notice this is something you seem to have done frequently in your Japan Collé etchings.

JCH. That's very interesting about Ingres . . . the reversing . . . that is what you do when you are assembling a drawing from transparent bits. It really is collage in its spirit, although it may come out as a drawing or painting. If you are not very creative you have to use whatever methods you can to get something out of yourself.

Q. They also say of Ingres that he would "pillage without scruple" the art of the past and of his contemporaries.

JCH. Bless his heart. Whatever you have to do to keep moving and developing. Some artists seem to be endlessly inventive all by themselves, others seem to stagnate and go over and over their same old terrain for years, others pillage without scruple. I know artists in all those categories. I think it was Picasso who said: the only person I try not to copy is myself.

Q. Speaking of Picasso, I see from your newest work that you are still working in a Cubist manner. That phase started with your set of *BRAQUE VARIATION* etchings of 1984. Very soon you will have been a Cubist as long as Picasso and Braque were. Could you speak a bit about why you are working in a Cubist style?

JCH. Well, style is a vehicle for carrying the concerns of the artist, a way of containing the things he finds interesting, wants to express or work with. For a long time many printmakers, including me, found the camera a good vehicle, almost a style in itself. Eventually I got tired of using the camera because it is so unmusical, so literate. It wants to tell you about something, wants you to look at something other than itself, becomes kind of window into the imagination, an unreal world. No harm in that, but I found it limiting. Perhaps I am too pedestrian, too matter of fact. I wanted to give more importance to things that are real, like colour and texture and structure and surface, marks, line, form, drawing, tone and so forth. The musical side of visual art . . .

Q. I'm not sure what you mean by musical, to tell you the truth.

JCH. Well, music is real, just in that it is not literate. There is not a screen of words between us and the experience. It is almost impossible to talk about music with any accuracy. You feel it. It is honest experience. Listen to the French Suites. They are about music itself. About the relationships of sounds, pitches, rhythms, durations, internal balances, and so forth. You can rejoice in all this without "understanding" in a conventional verbal explanatory sense. You can't say why you rejoice. It speaks to our mind and heart directly without chit-chat about outside associations. That is what I wanted to aim for in my very visual art of printmaking.

Q. So Cubism . . .

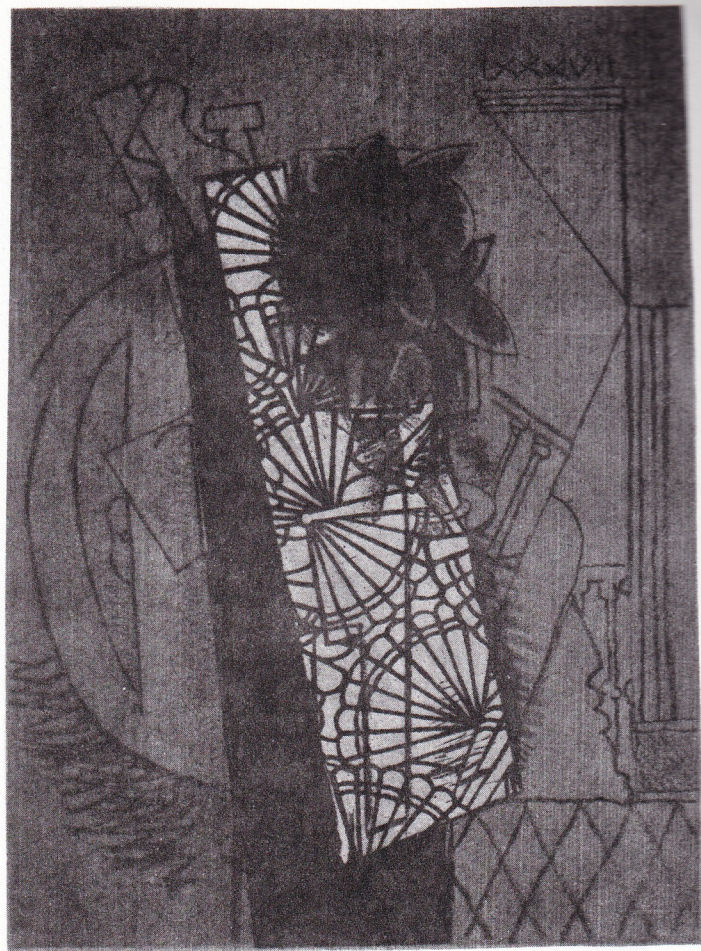
JCH. Cubism seems to be a good vehicle for this kind of concern. You are more or less conscious of a logical analytical system at the base of it. That gives it a structural underpinning and a vaguely intellectual satisfaction; but in fact Cubism is very satisfying on a purely visual level, able to "carry" all kinds of retinal excitement / stimulation, analogous to the audible stimulation of music. It contains a kind of high-strung nervous energy that is very animating, like music, as well as harmonies, repeats, and resolutions that are very satisfying and fulfilling, like music.

Q. So although we have already been through phases of analytic Cubism, synthetic Cubism, cool Cubism, pointilist Cubism, late Cubism; there is still something there to be explored by a "very late" Cubist like yourself . . .

JCH. Well, I am certainly finding it interesting anyway. That is my main criterion, the real test of "relevance": if it is interesting, it is relevant.

Q. Could you explain your general procedure in making these recent prints, how you get to a particular image?

JCH. It is still one of assemblage in that I am taking bits and pieces of this and that and moving them about until a relationship develops.



KV139 Japan Collé with Fans, 1987
Etching with Chiné Collé

I have drawers full of images and marks on transparent mylar, all sizes. Nowadays these are mostly hand drawn lines and curves. Using the big ones I assemble a structure, a skeleton, the way a sculptor might work, probably the way Ingres worked, as you describe it. Then moving from the general to the particular I build up the complexity of the composition, line, shape, texture, etc., keeping in mind the room I need to leave for transformations of the image at later stages of the etching and printing process. Similar procedure to my 1970's work, but at that time, in those immediate post-~~1970~~ days, I was composing with three dimensional things like cloth, plants, skulls, deserted buildings and so forth, using the 4 x 5 camera to bring it back to a two-dimensional form.

Once I've got a good rich structural composition of mylars, I make a contact negative and work on that. You see the composition differently in negative form, just as you see a dimensional composition differently in stereoscopic form. Sometimes you use the negative version if it's more interesting, sometimes you combine negative and positive elements as part of the constructive flipping of the image. It is very free. That freedom to go back and forth, inside-out, reversing, moving up and down in size, negative and positive, echo and repeat, is the real attraction of the mylar approach for me . . .

The key thing about this way of working, by the way, is to avoid tying down the image too much, to leave room for development later . . . Anyway the final mylar is "acquainted" with spray, exposed onto the presensitized zinc plate, and etched. From there, you work on as you would with any conventional etching plate; proofing and adjusting alternately.

~~1~~
*POST-STEREOSCOPY

ACQUAINTED



"Vanity Vanity"
30" x 40" Litho/Screenprint

Q. I notice that in Joan Murray's book (2.) you talk about the thrills of printmaking - the way your ideas force you to develop new techniques and then the techniques themselves give rise again to new ideas . . .

JCH. Yes, it's that interaction of the medium with your intent that is so interesting, a dialogue. Sometimes you start it going, sometimes the medium starts it. Otis Tamasauskas likes to say, in print, if you don't feel very creative you should invent something. That will get you going.

Q. You have said that silkscreen is really responsible for the development of these mylar approaches?

JCH. I think so. It is a relatively new, forward-looking medium that has always stressed convenience and practicality rather than tradition, so a lot of new methods were discovered and found ready acceptance. For example, there used to be a number of older methods of making silkscreen stencils: tusche and glue, cut stencils, litho crayon and blockout, shellac reversals, and so forth. They were all more or less workable, but none very reliable or predictable, especially for students. So when the photo emulsion methods came along, and proved reliable and problem-free, they pretty well replaced the older stencil-making methods. Especially as those old techniques didn't have a particular "look" that couldn't be done equally well on mylar. At the same time mylar turned out to have special qualities of its own for generating images and for capturing accidents and special effects . . .

Q. What do you mean by special effects?

JCH. Water wash, for example or peau-de-crapaud in lithography, foul bite in etching - some peculiar reaction of chemicals in the print process that gives rise to an usual effect. It often stimulates the artist to produce an image that he couldn't create with his or her usual paints or pencils. There are whole schools or printmaking based on a special device like water wash. Gorgeous, of course, and seductive for newcomers to print, Picasso loved those special effects and would do very clever prints with them . . .

Q. Anyway, you were saying about mylar and special effects?

JCH. Yes, mylar captures accidents very nicely. For example I remember being struck by the interesting convolutions you'd get on the

table when cleaning the ink out of your silkscreen after printing; a distorted, melting, reticulated version of your image, much more interesting than what you'd just printed: an exciting surprise. You can lay your mylar into that wet ink image, very gently, and lift an impression, like a transfer monoprint but on a transparent base, and voila: you've captured a fleeting phenomenon. You have something you can use, can expose back onto another screen or plate, and you're back to a repeatable image you can work with. Twenty years ago I did a series of prints based on accidental effects like that, called the Disparates.

Q. I find it hard to imagine that the accidental effects you describe would transfer successfully to a plate or screen. They sound a bit thin and transparent.

JCH. Well, some of them you'd have to beef up a bit, make them more opaque to light. Some you have to use quickly before they fall off the mylar.

Q. So how would you beef them up?

JCH. Well, you can dust the image with ferric oxide if it is tacky enough, as they do at Open Studio. That makes them opaque to light. Or if it is dry you can always go back and forth as cameramen say; make a contact negative on lith film, touch it up, and from that contact a new film positive. That technique is extremely sensitive, by the way, gets absolutely everything, all the detail, and makes a very sturdy workable image. In fact, you often find the negative more interesting than the positive and use that instead - or use both of them together for a reversal print, like a shellac or polymer reversal in litho.

Q. I've seen printers do that sort of thing to make duplicate plates for edition printing in litho, to put two printers to work simultaneously on the same image. You can also get an image from a litho stone onto a plate or silkscreen or an etching plate . . .

JCH. The negative stage is very useful for etchers. You can lay a fine random dot on your contact negative with a can of spray aluminum engine enamel, or with an airbrush and TN ink: then when you make your new positive it has that built-in "aquatint" to hold the ink in the darks without any fear of open bite.

Q. So you wouldn't need to use rosin on the plate.

JCH. All our students at Queen's are encouraged to keep a mylar record of every stage of their prints so they can get back into their image if they need to. Those delightful students print ahead full steam with great gusto, and when they do arrive at a good print it is often by good luck and high spirits. They generally finish up with an edition of one, because of all the proofing. That's fine. At the student level that's the best way to use printmaking, as a means of creating and exploring images. But if they do get a good print, they are often sorry they can't send it to exhibitions and so on. If they have put in a blank sheet of mylar at each printing they can back up, and do an edition.

Q. Proofing away like that is only one aspect of printmaking; another aspect is the professional printing of the edition. What I like about your system is that they only need to print an edition when they have seen that it is going to be worth doing. I've seen schools where "good" printing is stressed from the beginning. It usually results in nicely printed images that are boring in the extreme.

JCH. Starting back into an edition from a successful proof can teach you a lot, and it does have the virtue of being true to the medium, and all that. They are editioning an image that was created in and through print rather than trying to turn a painted or drawn image into a print.

Q. Which doesn't work anyway.

JCH. Right. Of course, there are those who say that if you have your one good print, why go back and do more. Well, that's fine. But it really is satisfying to have a good print that you can send to the numerous print exhibitions and give to your friends and hang in a gallery; that you can share. Otherwise you are right back with the exclusive and selfish object, like a painting or monoprint.

On another level, printing an edition can be a lovely Zen experience like archery or motorcycle maintenance; calm, cyclical, satisfying; one with the image and the medium. It is also a bit like marriage: you get to know the image beneath the skin, at many levels; you come to understand it and have a deeper relationship with it. Compared with the thrilling one time romance of a monoprint.

Of course, editioning is not for everyone. At a university level I don't feel any necessity to insist on it, only to recommend strongly to the more serious students. The ideal would be a special summer course in editioning after the end of the fourth year, only for the students who intend seriously to go on in printmaking. If they do limit themselves to proofing they really are missing something . . .

Q. That sounds almost exactly like the apprentice system you have in the summers a few years back.

JCH. That's true. It was just that. I am a bit sorry I can't do that any more on my new schedule. Those summers were usually fun, sometimes frustrating at the time, but always satisfying in retrospect to see how those five intensively trained people have gone on, right up to the present, sometimes in print, sometimes in other forms of art, but always working flat out for excellence.

Q. Going back to the editioning part, would you say that this method of forging ahead with gay abandon and yet keeping open the option of going back for an edition is only possible because of pulling a mylar at each stage?

JCH. Yes. Because we work in litho and screen at Queen's and the image on the stone or screen is erased or altered. After each printing it vanishes. So if you don't take a mylar at each stage you are no better off than a painter: you can move only forward, in a line, one dimensionally, as we move through time. When you have your mylars you can move backwards, forwards, sideways and inside out, in space and time, four dimensionally. You hold it all in your mind and in your hands, you move through the image and it moves through you because it is all accessible simultaneously: the sort of feeling of fusion and omnipresence that only happens in dreams . . .

Q. It sounds as if you have a real relationship with your images.

JCH. Well, that is why you are an artist at all, and a printmaker in particular; for that deep relationship with a living, changing thing, a relationship that is both richly sensual and intellectually stimulating . . .

Of course, as with many relationships, you sometimes discover after a while that you are wasting your time. In which case, no hard feelings, you wash off your mylars, take a shower, eat an orange, brush your teeth and start afresh . . .

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