Robert Cottieingham and the American Landscape

When Robert Cottieingham was twelve years old, he had an epiphany. He calls it a "seminal moment," a major experience that set the course for what he has been doing ever since. The moment took place at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York when, wandering through the galleries, he encountered Edward Hopper's painting, "Early Sunday Morning."

Cottieingham recalled the experience during a lecture he gave in conjunction with his visit to Tandem Press in March 1997. "It was the first time I realized that a painting could talk to you. Here was something that was feeding back to me. I had discovered another language—a silent language. It not only determined how I would paint—but I would be a realist painter—but it determined what I would paint." He later found further influence and inspiration in the graphic styles represented in works by Piet Mondrian, Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley and Stuart Davis, and the urban atmosphere of George Tooker.

It took a while for the childhood experience to transform itself into a full-time art career. Cottieingham initially went into commercial art after graduating from the Pratt Institute. He began as an artist and then served for several years as an art director for an advertising agency in New York, Los Angeles, and finally London.

In the early years, Cottieingham painted in the evenings and weekends as an adjunct to his day job. When he moved to Los Angeles, he said he had to quit painting for a year because of what he describes as a profound case of culture shock. The buildings, the landscape, and the light were so markedly different from what he had experienced in his native Brooklyn and the New York area. Gradually he returned to his part-time painting schedule.

In the process, he arrived at a conclusion about the direction his art would take. It hardened back to his encounter with Hopper as well as his professional experience. "I had decided by now that I was interested in the urban subject matter. I would stay in the city because that was where I was from. Basically, I'm an American landscape painter and this is my landscape."

He began doing what typifies his artistic explorations, concentrating on subject matter that interests him and doing a series of works to explore the possibilities of the subject. The series idea is related to the fact that "When I find something that interests me in terms of visual exploration, I tend to do a series of paintings because one doesn't seem to be enough."

Initially, it was a series of trucks, primarily the large commercial vehicles used to haul products or objects. Then, having come to terms with the Southern California landscape and ambiance, he made pictures of Los Angeles homes—modest neighborhood houses rather than elaborate Hollywood mansions.

While in Los Angeles, he had a second epiphany, one of what he describes as periodic "ares" between revelation and experience that characterize his creative evolution. This particular moment occurred when he began looking at the logo for the 20th Century Fox motion picture studio and realized that its design captured what he was trying to do as an artist. "There is a joy," he notes, "to seeing the three-dimensional world depicted on a two-dimensional surface. And it can work both ways."

It also was at this time that Cottieingham, recalling his childhood visits to Times Square, began to sense that there was something going on above eye level on the streets of Los Angeles. It manifest-
ed itself in the signs above the storefronts and building entrances. It was a whole world of communication, “messages being fired back and forth above the store windows.” It reflected what he characterized as “a golden age of outdoor signage,” something that is an integral part of the American experience. It led to the series he calls the “American Alphabet.”

He gathered material for the series after he was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 1974. In London at the time, he returned briefly to the United States and took a Greyhound bus excursion through the Northeast, photographing in 27 cities and gathering thousands of slides in the process. Later he moved his family back to Connecticut and became a full-time artist.

The slides provided the visual text for the alphabet series. Cottingham initially did two sets of the series, paintings in oil and then gouache. At Tandem, he is approaching the series in a gradual way, saying he anticipates working on the prints over a period of years and seeing where it leads. Cottingham notes that he is no stranger to printmaking. Since 1972 he has done nearly 80 prints. He enjoys the collaboration that comes with doing prints and the fact that it allows him to get out of his studio.

During visits to Tandem in 1991 and 1993, he created two prints from his “Rolling Stock Series,” a suite which features images of railroad cars. In this series he explored what he has described as “another world,” the back of the yard’s industrial landscape. Here he wanted to capture the grime and wear-induced patina of the rolling stock as well as working with light and shadow and breaking up areas of color, “to see how far I could get to abstraction through cropping an image.”

The “Rolling Stock Series” is a complement to another railroad motif he captured in “27 Heralds,” a series of paintings that depict the corporate logos of American railroads.

For Cottingham, the “American Alphabet” is a cultural and historical document, something that captures a part of the man-made environment. “I’m not interested in the age of things,” he says. “I’m interested in the fact that they’re disappearing.” He also sees an esthetic dimension in what he is doing with the letters in the series. “I think of them as formal arrangements. They’re almost an excuse to make an image and play with form, color, and line.”

During his visit in March 1997 he did two lithographs of the letters F and K. He returned in October and added D and J to the portfolio. Meanwhile, he continues to capture and preserve aspects of the ever-changing face of the American landscape. (AJ)

**Program Highlights**

The second semester of the 1997–98 academic year promises to be another eventful period for Tandem Press. Highlights include the following programs:

**Visiting Artists**

Three more distinguished artists will be in residence during the second semester. Judy Pfaff, who created a series of enormously popular prints during her first visit last year, returned for a second visit in January. Sam Richardson will make his fifth visit in March, and Charles Arnoldi, a Venice Beach, California-based artist, comes to Tandem in April for his first visit.

**New Catalogue Sheets Available**

Tandem has just published new catalogue sheets depicting the prints of Robert Cottingham, Grinn, Hollis Sigler, Art Spiegelman, Steven Sorman and John Wilde.

Please call Tandem Press if you would like to receive these copies at (608) 263-3437.

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**Print Symposium**

Both Wisconsin and nationally known curators, publishers, and artists will travel to Madison March 20–21 to participate in a Tandem Press sponsored symposium based on the theme of assessing the current state of printmaking in America. Visiting speakers will include: Marge Devon, Director of the Tamarind Institute, New Mexico; Richard Field, Curator of Prints, Drawings and Photographs, Yale University Art Gallery, Connecticut; Jon Cone, Editions, Vermont; David Kiehl, Curator of Prints at the Whitney Museum of American Art; Bud Shark of Shark's Incorporated, Colorado, and Richard Solomon, President of Pace Prints. The symposium is made possible with a grant from the Bringham Fund.

**UPCOMING TANDEM EXHIBITS**

St. Louis Printmarket 1998, April 15–19.
Art Chicago 1998, May 7–12.
From the Director

welcome to the new bi-annual newsletter from Tandem Press in which we hope to bring you up to date on our artists, educational programs, and events. Tandem Press was founded ten years ago by Bill Weege, a distinguished member of the Department of Art. The purpose of Tandem Press is to create an experimental printmaking workshop and fine art press and to provide a fully developed professional facility for the creation of works of art on paper. From the beginning the goal of Tandem Press has been to bring internationally recognized artists to interact with students and faculty and to parallel the overall university mission of education, research, and public service.

The School of Education, where Tandem Press is housed, has always enthusiastically embraced this idea and since 1987, fifty artists have created prints at the Press; 229 art, art history, and arts administration students have apprenticed at Tandem; and hundreds of workshops, lectures, and open houses have abounded. In addition, the visiting artists have made thousands of prints in collaboration with our master printers Andrew Rubin and Bruce Crownover with the assistance of the graduate students, and they now hang in museums, corporations, and private collections throughout the United States including the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum in New York, the Chicago Art Institute, and the National Museum of American Art in Washington D.C., just to name a few.

The UW Department of Art has a rich tradition in printmaking, and Tandem Press was created to ensure the University's continued leadership role in this heritage. Since 1987, graduate students have apprenticed at Tandem Press for a total of 26,500 hours. The Tandem educational programming is augmented with formal three-credit courses which are taught at the Press every semester by Professor Bill Weege. The Elvehjem Museum of Art serves as the archive for the Press and receives one impression of every editioned print.

The visiting artists come to Tandem Press because it is an experimental facility. But, Tandem has also had an extraordinary influence on the visiting artists. They have the opportunity to explore their creativity and they can undertake projects which cannot normally be carried out in a commercial facility. For example in 1990, under the auspices of Pace Editions, Chuck Close came to Tandem to work on the first phase of a reductive block print which was ultimately exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Later, Art Spiegelman carried out a two-sided lithograph which now hangs in the Art Institute of Chicago. Just this past fall, David Lynch, the internationally renowned film director and painter created prints for the first time, and Suzanne Caporello began to explore the elements in pigments which may lead to the creation of a book (see story on Caporello).

Since its inception, Tandem Press has also enabled faculty to work at the Press in formal and informal settings and has provided exhibiting opportunities for them throughout the United States.

At least 2,000 members of the community, faculty, and students attend Tandem Programs every year in Madison. These activities include lectures, demonstrations, and tours. Last year 700 people attended the David Lynch video presentation and talkback, and 600 people attended a presentation by Art Spiegelman. Tandem has worked with many departments on campus including Women's Studies and the American Indian Studies Program. Tandem has also collaborated with the Madison Public Schools. For example, last year, Tandem organized a week long residency for CRONK at West High School where he painted a mural in conjunction with the students.

In 1998 there will be many exciting activities. We look forward to seeing you at the Press or at one of our many exhibitions throughout the United States.

Paula McCarthy Panczenko

Art Spiegelman, Lead Pipe Sunday #2 (Derby Dugan), 1997
Side 1, front and back image; lithograph on Rives BFK Buff paper, Edition of 50, 21 by 33 inches
Suzanne Caporael is nationally known as one of the West Coast's most exciting artists. Her work is in many prestigious collections and major museums including The Art Institute of Chicago, The Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, the High Museum, Atlanta, The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. At Tandem Press, over the past three years, Suzanne Caporael has continued an exploration which developed from a body of work which was first shown in 1996 entitled *Elements and Kingdoms*.

Her second print project at Tandem Press was entitled the "*Periodic Table of the Elements*." She then worked on a series of hand-painted luminous etchings where she explored color as a biological indicator. These prints are spare, elemental, and deeply poetic. They were entitled the "Coloration" series. The imagery in the prints resembled blocks and lines of text, but the colors were based on the changing pigmentation of beetles at extreme temperatures and/or altitudes.

In the most recent series of prints, Suzanne decided to explore the chemical elements in pigments. She created three new prints entitled *Cobalt Violet: O, Co, P*, *Zinc White: O, Zn*, and *Chrome Orange: Cu, O, H, Pb*. In each print the main color, depicted as a solid block shape, is placed at the top of the print and the elements appear underneath as blocks of colors representing the Elements. For example, *Cobalt Violet: O, Co, P* is painted as a luminous violet shape on a printed neutral background and the three elements, Oxygen, Cobalt and Phosphorous appear underneath as three smaller shapes in pale warm green, dark grey, and dense phthalo. One of most compelling aspects of the prints is the fact that the shapes of the blocks of colors are based on stanzas in poetry. In *Cobalt Violet*, Suzanne utilizes a Raymond Carver Poem, *The Little Room*.

In the future we hope to work with Suzanne on the creation of a book, including all the discrete pigments. The main block of color would appear on one sheet and the elements would appear on the opposite side (unlike the prints where they appear underneath). Text may also be included. Tandem believes that this would be an incredible project and we also hope to work in collaboration with the Silver Buckle Press, a fine art press at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, so that this project would become a three-way collaboration with the artist. (FMCP)
From The Director of Development:

I am happy to have this opportunity to thank you, the numerous contributors to Tandem Press. Your investment in this important facet in the School of Education enables the UW Madison to provide the “margin of excellence” for which we are pleased to be known.

Your support allows Tandem to carry out projects that make a significant contribution to the University’s extraordinarily rich learning environment and promotes Tandem’s outreach and publication efforts.

The net result of your support is that Tandem and the University of Wisconsin will continue to be a valuable resource for future generations. You are encouraged to become actively involved with Tandem by directing gifts to specific areas of interest to you. If you have any question about how your gift is being used or how to achieve your charitable giving goals, please contact me.

Cindy Kahn

Any questions regarding support can be directed to Cindy Kahn, who can be reached by e-mail at cindy@uwfound.wisc.edu, by phone at (608) 262-6242, or by mail at the UW Foundation, 1848 University Avenue, Madison WI 53705.

Support For Tandem:
As many of you are aware, Tandem benefits greatly from private support. By definition, the margin of excellence that enables Tandem continually to provide cutting-edge programs and attract the finest printmakers is made possible by the generosity of our private supporters. To this end we have the Tandem Press General Fund, the purpose of which is to aid Tandem in its teaching, research, and public service roles. In addition, Tandem like all areas of the University is looking for graduate student support. To maintain and improve research and investment in graduate education and to provide opportunities for deserving students are critical. The goal of graduate student support is to ensure that Tandem continues to attract the most talented students. This is particularly critical in view of decreasing state and federal money available for the support of graduate students.

Wilfrid Fund
In 1995, through generous gifts from a number of donors, the Joseph Wilfrid Visiting Artist Endowment Fund was established. The purpose of this fund is to honor Joe Wilfrid, who died of a brain tumor in 1994. Wilfrid was a loyal UW alumnus, devoted to Madison, one of the original founders of Tandem Press, and a board member. Following his graduation from the University, he founded a paper mill and became director of the Madison Art Center. He moved to New York City in 1980 and a year later became director of publications at Pace Editions.

Throughout his professional career, his enthusiasm, energy, and creativity made him an innovative force in the field of printmaking. He was a teacher and tireless advocate for young developing artists. He also was highly esteemed by many of America’s internationally renowned artists. As a direct result of his encouragement many artists came to work at Tandem Press, including Chuck Close, Richard Bosman, Robert Cottingham, Janet Fish, Sandri Freckleton, Don Nice, Sam Richardson, Robert Stackhouse, and Alan Shields.

To date close to $100,000 has been raised with a goal of $250,000. This fund, while honoring Joe’s vital contributions to the art community, will provide income to support an Annual Visiting Artist Program for Tandem. This fund would enable Tandem as well as our donors, not only to recognize a leader in the field, but also to provide UW students with exposure to individuals at the forefront of their field from the national community.

As with all gifts to Tandem, contributions to the Joseph Wilfrid Visiting Artist Endowment Fund are tax deductible and should be sent to the UW Foundation indicating the fund name with your gift.
Filmmaker David Lynch came to Tandem in December 1997, shortly before the winter holiday break, for a productive period of printmaking. During his stay he created more than thirty different images—producing monotypes and editioned prints of etchings and collographs.

Lynch worked closely with Tandem master printers Andy Rubin and Bruce Crowover, along with a group of graduate students, using all as full-fledged partners in the creative process. He was particularly appreciative of the opportunity to work with the students, generously claiming “They’ve got more to offer me than I have to offer them.”

In one notable sequence of monoprints, Lynch incorporated the corpses of houseflies into the design of the print. Virtually all the work he created was monochromatic, utilizing shades of black and gray on white paper. As he has explained to interviewer Chris Rodley in the recently published, *Lynch on Lynch*, “It’s the darker things I find really beautiful . . . color to me is too real.”

Lynch is primarily known as a filmmaker, having directed such distinctly personal works as *Eraserhead* (1976), *Blue Velvet* (1986), and *Lost Highway* (1997). He also is known for *Dune* (1984), the adaptation of Frank Herbert’s science fiction novel, *The Elephant Man* (1984), based on a chapter from a book by Frederick Treves, and *Wild at Heart* (1990), adapted from a novel by Barry Gifford. The latter film was awarded the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival. He also gained considerable attention through his television series *Twin Peaks* (1989) and the subsequent 1992 film, *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, based on the series.

Because he has primarily built his reputation as a film director and screenwriter, Lynch obliged the enthusiastic audience who filled Mills Hall for his public lecture on campus by showing his 22-minute 1988 video entitled *The Cowboy and the Frenchman*.

Following the video presentation, Lynch joined Tandem Press director Paula Parzechko on stage for a talkback question period. Many in the audience, particularly the students, showed an obvious familiarity with and respect for his films. He was candid and unassuming in his responses to their questions, indicating at various points that he was more interested in what the questioners had to say than he was in expounding on his own works.

While some questioners hoped to draw him out on the theoretical issues and messages found in his work, Lynch was reticent, deferring such discussion to the audience rather than the creator. “I don’t talk about messages. If a hundred people see a film, you get a hundred messages.”

Explaining the rationale behind his residency at Tandem, he pointed out that he had actually begun his artistic career as a child who created his own world through painting and drawing. “When you’re painting,” he said, “you’re by yourself and it’s action and reaction.”

He went on to stress the importance of getting the work done above philosophical considerations. “Fate plays a huge part in our lives. There are plenty of people who have great ideas but the door doesn’t open.”

During his stay, David Lynch opened numerous doors.
**Press Notes**

- Tandem Press produces top-quality prints by nationally recognized artists, and was created to foster research, collaboration, experimentation and innovation in the field of printmaking.


**Tandem Press Programs:**
- Lectures and Demonstrations in conjunction with Visiting Artists
- Faculty Visiting Artist Program
- Courses in Printmaking
- Student Master Printer Program
- Tours and Open Houses
- Exhibitions
- Dinners at the Wilson Street Grill to meet Visiting Artists
- Annual Tandem Press Wine Auction
- Subscription Program
- The Joseph Wilfer Visiting Artist Endowment Fund

This newsletter is made possible with a grant from the Brittingham Fund

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**Gronk, The Return, 1997**
Woodblock print on handmade paper
Edition of 28, 42 by 42 inches (approx.)

**Hollis Sigler, She Dreams of Escaping to Hope, 1997**
Intaglio on Rives BFK paper
Edition of 22, 24 1/2 by 27 3/4 inches

**John Wilde**
15 Cooksillians, 1997
Hand-colored lithograph on Somerset Velvet paper
Edition of 15, 18 by 60 inches
Fifth Annual Wine Auction

Tandem Press will hold its fifth annual wine auction on Thursday, June 18, at six o'clock in the evening. Mary Alice and Jim Wimmer will host the event at their home in Maple Bluff. The program will include a live and silent auction during which a variety of wines, hors d'oeuvres, and a gourmet dinner catered by Greg Upward and Steven Pecka of Madison will be served.

The wines to be auctioned will include high-end selections from a variety of local and regional donors and California vineyards as well as a number of moderately priced but equally fine wines. Wines will be available for tasting and purchase during the silent and live auctions.

The June 18th wine auction promises to be an evening full of choice wines, tempting culinary delicacies, and exquisite artwork. All are invited and tickets will be available in May; however, attendance is limited to the first 175 persons. Tickets cost $75 each. The first 75 persons purchasing two tickets will receive a print by Ann Parker.