

Editorial

Prints, artists' books, posters, multiples, printed ephemera have been displayed, sold and collected in international, large-scale exhibitions. Alongside paintings and sculptures, they were—and still are—regularly exhibited at the Venice Biennale, São Paulo Biennale, Documenta and in several other perennial exhibitions. Regardless of their continuous presence and vitality, there have been few studies about the role of prints and artists' editions in the context of these exhibitions. *OBOE's* third issue, *Exhibiting Prints: The Role of Printmaking in Large Scale Exhibitions* guest edited by Jennifer Noonan, intends to redress this lacuna while shedding new light on the manner in which printed matter has been vital for the life and fortune of large-scale international exhibitions.

Works on paper have often played a pivotal role in disseminating artists' works to an international audience. As multiples, they are more accessible, and have a lower production and distribution cost. They are easier to transport than painting or sculpture, but also to collect, which led several art museums of distinguishable importance to acquire prints from international large-scale exhibitions. Notably, when Alfred H. Barr launched MoMA Activities, he almost immediately established a Print Cabinet and enriched it over the years with purchases from large-scale exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale. It is no coincidence that even today major art fairs like TEFAF in Maastricht devote an entire section of the commercial show to works on paper and prints. Furthermore, at the beginning of the 20th century, printed editions were one of the preferred strategies to advertise these exhibitions. They served to bolster cultural tourism and to emphasise the value of exhibitions.

Over the 20th century, prints and editions also acquired a strong political component, and not just in an attempt to disrupt the uniqueness of the canonical artwork. The use of the medium as ephemera, for propaganda, posters, cards, manifestos, political statements, and leaflets of performances is quite renown. In 1969, for instance, *Contrabiennial*, the counter exhibition organized as a protest against the XI São Paulo Biennial, made use of a book to spread the boycott. In the other cases, prints have acted also as means of democratization. In the 1970s at the Venice Biennale, for example, printmaking ateliers were organized both in the Central pavilion and at the United States pavilion at the Giardini. In both instances, the open ateliers established a relationship with the viewer by making them aware of and taking part in the process.

From the first perennial of the Venice Biennale in 1895 with the Sale del Bianco e del Nero, to the most recent documenta 15 (2022), in which even the making of prints through the Lumburg Press was part of the exhibition, printed material has always held a specific, if not shifting, place. The exhibition of prints and artists' editions within these venues has provided opportunities for national representation and the dissemination of ideas, even in times of changing regimes and difficult economic circumstances. For this reason, to understand the constitutive role of prints it is necessary to incorporate various perspectives on cultural tourism, dissemination of the avant-garde, bourgeois collections, taste-making, democratisation of art, institutional critique, as well as politics. This issue, therefore, is necessarily cross-disciplinary, gathering together a group of scholars and researchers with varied methodologies and approaches. Examining the production, presence and circulation of printed matter in biennial-type exhibitions from its origins to the present moment will expand histories of printmaking and will enrich the body of literature on large-scale, international exhibitions.

For this special issue, we have been assisted by a specialist on this topic, Jennifer Noonan, who has edited this issue selecting the papers of Alessia Del Bianco, Maeve Coudrelle and Camilla Pietrabissa. The issue begins with Noonan's overview of the history of prints at the Venice Biennale between the 1930s and the 1970s. The essay argues that the prints displayed during this timeframe offer a picture of the artworld and reveal the shifting aesthetic, cultural and political contexts in which they were situated.

Alessia Del Bianco takes a step back in time in an attempt to outline the history of the graphic arts sections of the Biennales of 1899 and 1901. Within these two iterations of the Venetian show she examines the background, proposals, organisation and selection of artists, as well as considering their artistic reception.

With Maeve Coudrelle the focus moves to Chile and the Bienal Americana de Grabado between 1963 and 1970. By contextualizing the Bienal in relation to other large-scale exhibitions in the region, the essay argues that—in the midst of the Cold War period—the accessibility and affordability of prints allowed the Bienal to promote a network of exchange and collaboration, while also foregrounding Latin America's contribution in the medium of prints.

The special issue ends with Camilla Pietrabissa's essay on Aleksandra Mir's postcard project at the 53. Venice Biennale in 2009. The ephemeral nature of Mir's work is used to discuss the ability of the postcard to problematize the memory of place as well as the close link between the contemporary art world and the economy of tourism in late capitalism.

In addition, in the section *Miscellanea*, the issue hosts Jacob Lund's essay "Exhibition as Reflective Transformation". Taking Forensic Architecture's project *Triple-Chaser* as its point of departure, Lund theoretically explores the role of exhibitions in contemporary aesthetic and artistic practice. Finally, Adelaide Duarte and Lígia Afonso provide us with a meticulous review of three books, published between 2020 and 2021, reflecting on the mutual histories and shared aspects of contemporary art fairs and biennials. This is the first time that *OBOE* offers a book review, but we hope to publish many more in the future!